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They fight for Portugal in Guiné



19 REPORT ON PORTUGAL'S WAR IN GUINÉ-BISSAU

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Issue #19

April, 1973

PORTUGAL'S WAR IN GUINE-BISSAU

by

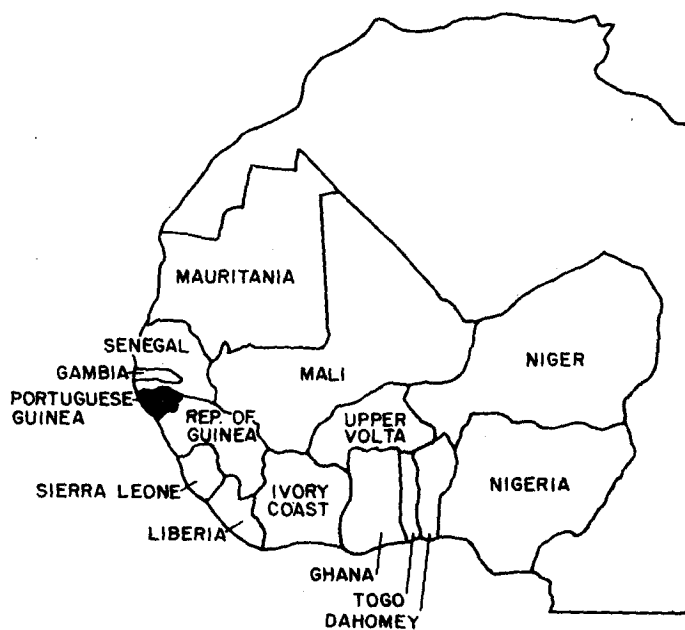
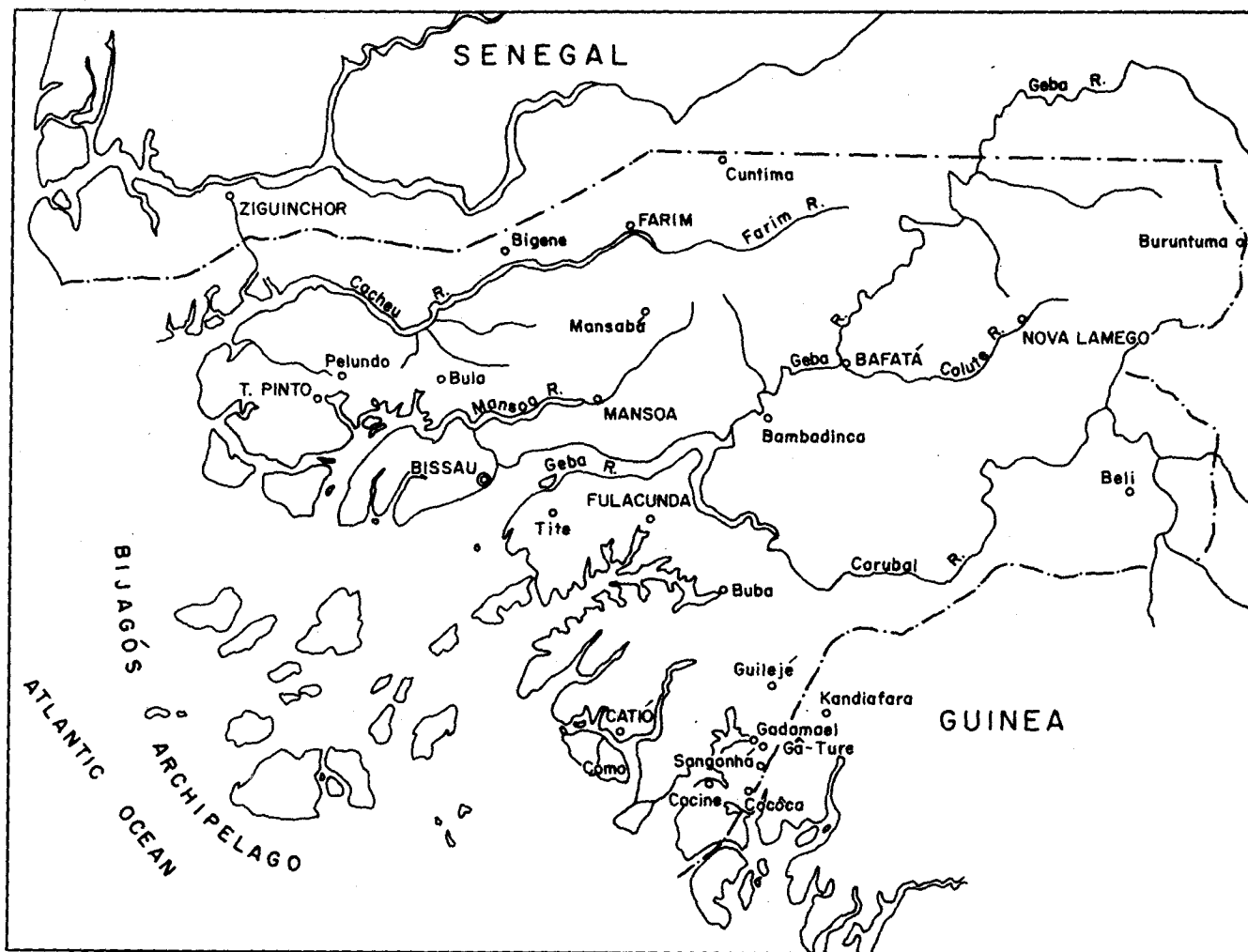
Al J. Venter

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PORTUGUESE GUINEA
and
Location on the
West Coast of Africa

Introduction

On January 20, 1973, at 10:30 p.m., Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde), was assassinated in front of his home in Conakry, Guiné. Up to that moment, it appeared to most observers that the African insurgents were well on their way to victory in Portuguese Guinea. Cabral's manner of thinking and living, as well as his writing, reflected much of Portuguese culture. Because of this, and also because, basically, Cabral was not a man of violence, it appeared that the decade-long struggle would in the end bear out, in some aspects, the observation made by Richard Tawney in the Acquisitive Society: "Revolutions are apt to take on their color from the regime they overthrow."

Since Cabral's death, the revolutionary movement has taken on an uncertain hue, not least as a result of the involvement of members of the movement in the murder of its brilliant leader. While Cabral was amenable to a political settlement, his successors do not appear to be so. Cabral often made the statement, "We are not fighting the Portuguese people." On the occasion of freeing three Portuguese soldiers captured in battle, he declared, "At the very heart of the Portuguese government a realist tendency is showing itself, making its voice widely heard and seeking adequate means of making the extremists understand that the colonial war is not only useless but irremediably lost in our country."¹ John Marcum said of him, "In his life there was no contradiction between rhetoric and role."

Cabral's friends quote him as having said he would prefer Portuguese domination to Russia's, but he would rebel against either. Although Cabral favored conciliation, he believed there were circumstances which called for violence. While visiting New York in February, 1970, he was invited to a private discussion group. A pacifist in the group questioned Cabral critically about the use of violence for any purpose. The PAIGC leader passionately replied, "With 99.7% illiteracy after 400 years of domination! This is more violent than bombs."

¹ Cabral, Amilcar, Revolution in Guinea, An African People Struggles (London, no publisher, 1969).

The precise facts of Cabral's murder are not now, and may never be, clear. Oleg Ignatiev, a Russian correspondent, was accompanying a Cuban-trained PAIGC film unit at the time of the killing. Ignatiev, who claims he was the only correspondent with the PAIGC at that time, wrote a series of articles in Pravda², giving eyewitness details. These included an interview with Anna Maria Cabral, with whom he had become acquainted on three previous visits to Guiné. Mrs. Cabral told Ignatiev that she and her husband were returning from a reception at the Polish embassy, when Cabral was shot. The assassins were Innocenio Kani and several other conspirators, all of whom she knew to be members of the PAIGC. Kani had been a member of the Supreme Council and commander of the guerrillas' flotilla of gunboats. The story appears reliable, although the Soviet press does fall into errors on Portuguese Africa. For instance, a photograph, credited to Tass and purporting to be of armed guerrilla fighters in a PAIGC camp in Guiné, appeared in Pravda, February 21, 1973. The exact picture, credited to the Daily World of the United States, was printed in Trud on February 23, and was captioned as being of Frelimo (Frente de Libertacao de Moçambique) fighters in Mozambique.

Le Soleil, Senegal's principal newspaper, reported that some sixty-two people were implicated in the assassination of Cabral, and that friction within the movement between the Cape Verdians and the Africans from Guiné-Bissau was rampant. Luiz Cabral, brother of the slain leader, told Le Monde that the assassination had been organized by the Portuguese political police "with the help of traitors in our party." He accused NATO countries as having "taken part indirectly," through their aid to Portugal. It is one of history's ironies that Amilcar Cabral, the Cape Verdian who spoke for reconciliation, was not heard. As Shaw so aptly phrased it, "Assassination is the extreme form of censorship."

But the war continues. And the international dimension expands as more countries become involved. Recently eight Cubans were reported to have drowned in the Cacheu River and there have been other reports of Cubans being captured. This has led to speculation that Cubans or other foreign technicians have been operating the "heatseeking" ground-to-air missiles such as the one that shot down one of Portugal's top combat pilots flying a Fiat G-91 fighter-bomber. Another missile brought down a Harvard reconnaissance plane. In addition, two Dornier 27s crashed, bringing the total for the first half of April, 1973, to

² February 13, 18, and 27, and March 4 and 6, 1973.

four planes, which is equal to Portugal's losses for the entire war.

The Swedish Agency of International Development has made a new grant to the PAIGC of \$76,000 for food and vehicles. This brings the total Swedish gifts over the past four years to the PAIGC, which is the major recipient of such Swedish aid, to about \$3,450,000. The struggle going on in Portuguese Guiné, then, is no longer an "unknown war."

As is the case with most guerrilla wars, the most difficult question to answer is, Who actually is in control of what territory? Control can vary rapidly from one day to another, and Guiné's forest and swamp topography makes orientation particularly difficult. Evidence suggests that a United Nations mission, which claimed to have traveled rather widely inside Guiné, did little more than cross the border. Only an experienced observer, doing his own map reading, is likely to come near to an accurate report.

Within recent months, two such experienced men have criss-crossed much of Guiné, and arrived at different conclusions. Professor David Niddrie, of the University of Florida, an old Africa hand, saw little evidence of liberation fighters during his travels late in 1972, which covered hundreds of miles inside the small country. Dr. Niddrie is convinced that the Portuguese are in control of the great bulk of Guiné. He believes they are supported by such people as the Felupe and the Fula, and they are making³ headway with the Balantas, who so strongly backed Cabral in the past.

Basil Davidson, a⁴ perceptive scholar of African history as well as an intrepid reporter, recently returned from a fresh visit to Guiné. His report differs from Niddrie's. After six weeks with the PAIGC, including twenty-seven days on patrols with the guerrillas, Davidson claims that they control at least two-thirds of the countryside, that they have established regular administration, and that they hold genuine elections⁵ (the latest of which took place on March 31, 1973) in many areas. Davidson feels strongly that most of the correspondents who

³ Personal letter, January 23, 1973.

⁴ See his account of "Walking 300 Miles with Guerrillas through the Bush of Eastern Angola," Munger Africana Library Notes, No. 6.

⁵ Personal letter, January 20, 1973.

visit Bissau are too impressed with merely counting men and machines, and they fail to appreciate the paramount importance of politics and psychology in a long drawn-out guerrilla action.

In his book Mr. Venter presents evidence supporting the conclusions of both men. Venter's recent correspondence indicates that he believes the control of over fifty percent of the territory shifts from day to night. The question of physical control of land is much more than academic in importance. Just before Cabral was murdered, he was prepared to announce that over sixty UN countries--approximately one-half of that organization--were prepared to grant diplomatic recognition to the PAIGC on the grounds that it had de facto control of most of the territory. Luiz Cabral, commander of the northern front, told a Nigerian reporter in Conakry that the announcement was postponed because the "plans were ruined by the assassination."⁶

Guiné-Bissau's importance to the entire liberation movement in Africa is out of proportion to the small amount of land involved, land which has never been a source of wealth to Portugal. The capture of Bissau's capital could release great energies throughout Africa which might revitalize the liberation movement, parts of which are now moribund. But Guiné is not quite the paradigm of Africa which Davidson suggests in The Liberation of Guiné.⁷ The inability of the PAIGC to win so far is discouraging to other movements. The capture of Bissau would not necessarily guarantee success on other battlefronts where the conditions are less favorable and the opposition stronger, but the psychological impact upon war-weary Portugal could be crucial.

Both General Antonio de Spínola in Bissau and the new leaders of the PAIGC know that the war is not being fought over territory as such, but over the hearts and minds of the indigenous peoples of Guiné. Five years ago the French expert on guerrilla warfare, Gérard Chaliand, after living with Cabral's troops, concluded that they had moved from harassment to offensive action, and that they had a good chance to succeed where only three major guerrilla efforts--the Chinese, the Vietnamese against the French, and the Cubans--have succeeded since World War II. At that time he considered the Guiné war to be "the most important armed struggle on the African continent."⁸ This may

⁶The Nigerian Sunday Times, April 1, 1973.

⁷Penguin, 1969.

⁸Chaliand, Gérard, (English Edition) Armed Struggle in Africa: With the Guerrillas in "Portuguese" Guinea (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

still be true today.

Al J. Venter is a 34-year-old correspondent who has traveled widely in Africa from Eritrea to the Caprivi Strip, covering guerrilla actions for the London Daily Express, the National Broadcasting Company News, the Argus Africa News, the International Defence Revue of Geneva, and the Intelligence Digest. He has drawn kudos as a political analyst and for his book on the Angolan war.⁹

This publication on Portuguese Guinea is the first major account in English of the Guiné war from the Portuguese front lines and their headquarters. It complements numerous long and short reports, most notably those of Basil Davidson, of the fighting from the side of the African guerrillas.

In this book, Venter takes a new look at the Portuguese presence in the territory where the odds seem greatest against them. He concedes "Portugal cannot and will not last out indefinitely in Africa." But he is critical of those journalists who depict the Portuguese as simply "paper tigers." The fact that the poorest nation in western Europe has succeeded in fighting three wars on eight fronts over a period of thirteen years indicates an accomplishment in strategy and logistics which Venter believes refutes the label of "poor and incompetent fighters." When he surveys the broad sweep of guerrilla efforts against rule by white minorities, Venter finds it significant that guerrilla forces in southern Africa have been unable to capture a single sizable town in over a decade of fighting. He believes that a Che Guevara or a General Giap would aim at such an enormous psychological prize after such prolonged hostilities. But, Venter says, he was told at the OAU summit in Addis Ababa in 1971 that the capture of towns was not a guerrilla priority.

This study obviously does not engage in speculation as to the future composition of the PAIGC and its new leadership. Ronald Segal, author of books on South Africa, India, and monetary problems, and a self-styled "revolutionary," asserts that of all the leadership cadres he has seen in the Third World "the PAIGC is the ablest."¹⁰ The possibility of a significant division within the PAIGC is strongly refuted by Basil Davidson. In a detailed account concerning the conspirators, Davidson views the murder as having been inspired

⁹ Venter, Al J., The Terror Fighters (London: Purnells, 1969).

¹⁰ In a speech at Pomona College, March 22, 1973.

directly by General de Spínola as part of a "reserve" plan, during which Cabral and President Sékou Touré were to have been killed, after the invasion of Conakry.¹¹ The invasion proved to be unsuccessful.

It is hard to judge what the reaction of a movement will be soon after the removal of a man in such manifest command as was Cabral. Speculation would have to include the future of the other Guiné liberation groups, particularly those joined together under the general heading of FLING (Frente para a Libertação e Independência da Guiné Portuguesa). As Richard Gibson and others point out, FLING groups were fighting inside Guiné before Cabral's PAIGC.¹² But in recent years FLING groups have stayed in the Senegal bases and made propaganda, not war. What gives them new importance is their concentration upon Guiné to the exclusion of the Cape Verde Islands, a fact that assumes new significance in the light of the assassination. Venter's conversation with General de Spínola about the ten Cape Verde Islands, which the Portuguese commander sees as an objective of Soviet penetration into Africa, is germane to the Verde-Guiné split. It appears that Portugal would be more likely to make major concessions in Guiné if the future of Cape Verde were not linked to the mainland territory.

In the final analysis, few observers would deny that the Portuguese armed forces have persevered longer under difficult conditions, have gained more indigenous support, and that Caetano's government in Lisbon has supplied the Guiné war front and the farflung wars in Angola and Moçambique far more effectively and with less disturbance to the home economy than either Portugal's enemies, or its friends, would have anticipated.

ESM

¹¹ West Africa, April 9, 1973.

¹² African Liberation Movements (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

I

DEATH FOR AN IDEAL

If war is the continuation of politics, using other means,
politics also is the continuation of war through other means.

Clausewitz's definition of war

Captain Joao Bacar of Bissau was an incredibly brave man. He died brutally on a quiet Sunday morning on April 25, 1971.

For ten years this black man had been immersed in a grim guerrilla struggle which had rent his tiny West African nation as no other upheaval had done since the great Malian general Mansa Musa had swept westwards, past Timbuktu, to bring the writ of this vast African empire to the verge of the great Atlantic, six centuries before.

Short, lean, and as tough as Moslem Africa makes them, Captain Bacar was a remote product of this astonishingly wealthy and influential civilization which has left its mark on Africa to this day. He relished and vouchsafed its traditions, handed down through thirty generations, but still intact.

He rallied to what he termed was the defence of the principles which had been laid down by his illustrious forefathers and which in the present era, as far as he was concerned, were being threatened by an alien and ungodly force from beyond and nurtured by powers which had only self-interest and quasi-imperialist designs in mind.

Not for a moment did this Fula Commando Captain--one of whose few gestures to the western society he lived in was the small moustache he assiduously cultivated like most of his other fellow-officers--ever consider that this same self-interest could have been applied to the flag he fought under. Bacar was born under that green and red banner. He considered himself proudly and often arrogantly as Portuguese. Nothing else.

The Europeans from the Iberian headland, 2,000 miles to the north, qualified that fealty by treating this black warrior as one of their sons. Their mutual empathy reached its peak shortly before

Bacar was killed, when they rewarded him with Portugal's highest military honour. The Futa-Fula Captain had become one of the few.

But death holds no awe for military immortality and so it happened that early Sunday morning that April, Joao Bacar made his final gesture to the society he believed so implicitly he was protecting.

A week after I had left him at Tite while on patrol in a dense jungle area in which we had spent two days scouring for the enemy, he was killed. He died in an early morning skirmish with the black guerrillas of PAIGC, the West African guerrilla movement also known as Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde.

Caught in the cross-fire of a heavy enemy ambush along a lonely stretch of jungle south of Bissau, capital of Portuguese Guinea, his unit took the brunt of a well-planned and executed rocket and mortar attack. The PAIGC guerrillas had laid their trap with care. Three "ballerina" anti-personnel mines--the same type that is known to the Americans in Indo-China as "Bouncing Betty"--were placed in a pattern in the shallow ground across the path the Portuguese troops were expected along. None of the vanguard of the patrol had noticed the nine prongs, three to each mine, bulging slightly in the red dirt. The mines had been so sited that the first soldier to cross the area would set off the explosion. The blast would also be the signal to attack.

But in keeping with the quirks of war, five soldiers managed to cross the deadly zone without any one of them triggering the prongs. The sixth man followed confidently, probably satisfied in his own mind that if there were any mines in the path ahead they would long ago have been spotted or tripped by the usually eager-eyed black scouts who led the way. He had probably long before stopped following in the footsteps of the man ahead of him, for the unit was on its second day of patrol.

Number six was wrong. At the touch of his soft-soled rubber jungle boot, which is standard issue in the Portuguese Army, the "ballerina" leapt, with a dull thud, spinning out of its nest in the earth. It was still spinning when it hit its shoulder-high apex and exploded downwards killing number six and badly mauling the man behind. Numbers eight and nine received superficial shrapnel wounds in the legs and thigh and for some minutes were too badly shocked by the blast to

comprehend the battle which raged viciously around them. They lay and grimaced in the dust, hardly conscious through the dull echoes that hummed in their brains of further explosions along the line.

Perhaps this shocked sprawl saved them as they lay there, because five more of their number were cut down by rocket and rifle fire in the minutes which followed. One man, Joao Bacar, was killed by a grenade. His own.

Bacar's reflexes were functioning almost before he heard the slight, muffled explosion that triggered the "ballerina" land mine into the air about 100 yards ahead of him. He was already firing by the time the mine went off within touching distance of number six. So were thirty others of his unit, by now crouched low in the long elephant grass on the verge of the verdant stretch of ragged rain forest with its dinosaur-spine of tall palms which gave the jungle around them a crazy, trunkular effect against the tropical sky.

Once the first ammunition clips had been exhausted, fire wavered momentarily on both sides. Bacar did not have to order his men to reload and keep firing their G-3s. His men were the cream of Portugal's commando force in Guinea and had been well trained. The swarthy captain must have been satisfied with their split-second reaction, for he said nothing throughout the action, the patrol's survivors said later.

For more than two minutes the shooting continued. The black Portuguese under Bacar knew the routine; exhaust a clip and hurl a grenade to back up the three mortar and bazooka positions which were lobbing shells into the nearby bush cluster, then fire again.

Enemy fire slackened. There was hazy movement in the jungle ahead. Still silent, Bacar pulled the safety pin from his second grenade. He then rose abruptly to throw it. But a silent, unexpected force knocked his legs out from under him; Bacar had slipped on a patch of wet marsh clay, a formation not unusual in a region that has more rain in a month than many parts of Europe and Africa enjoy in a year. He hit the ground, the grenade still in his hand.

Now the normal firing time of a Portuguese hand-grenade--a long tubular affair that looks more like a khaki can of shaving cream than a deadly instrument of war--is roughly four seconds once the pin has been withdrawn. When Bacar came to his senses, and found

himself lying there on his stomach with the grass above his head and the two men nearest him only a yard away, he had two of those seconds left. They were probably the longest of his life.

He could have tried to disentangle himself from his crouched position and hurl the grenade to safety, but then there was the prospect of killing others around him. Instead, he pulled the bomb in close to his body with both hands and dedicated the rest of his brief time on earth to Mohammed the Prophet.

None of those who were around him at the time remember his last words, for they also were frozen in terror of the inevitable. But one of his men, a young corporal who had recently joined the unit from the north, remembers seeing Bacar's lips move. It could only have been a prayer, he recalls. It was ironic, too, that Bacar was facing the rising sun, looking east, in the direction of his beloved Mecca, when the blast flung his body into the air, smashing it and the firing mechanism of the gun he had slung around his waist.

The news of Captain Joao Bacar's death swept through Portugal and its African Empire in a tide of shrouded sorrow and whispered dismay. Joao Bacar was dead, the people in Portuguese Guinea told one another in quiet tones, almost afraid the next man would hear the news, as if he had not already.

Within the hour the base camp Tite, from which Bacar and his men were operating, knew. Another hour and they were setting the event in hot metal in newspapers in Lisbon, Luanda, and Lourenço Marques, complete with comment and the eulogies of a dozen men who had lived and served with this son of Africa.

One more hour and the news was carried by the BBC. Captain Joao Bacar, one of the most famous veterans of Portugal's war in Guiné-Bissau, had been killed in action by a PAIGC guerrilla unit; Bacar was a recent recipient of the coveted gold Order of the Tower and the Sword, Portugal's highest military award. That he had been killed by his own grenade did not really matter. The Fula officer was a victim of the war, as surely as if he had died from a guerrilla's bullet.

Many of his countrymen only believed the news when his shrapnel-torn body was brought back to Bissau by helicopter the next day. He had often been reported dead before, usually by the enemy, who fanfared his death on Radio Conakry and the smaller guerrilla

station just across the frontier, Radio Libertaçao. But in the ten years they had only succeeded in wounding him lightly four times. He had reciprocated ruthlessly by killing that many dozen of them.

It was a sombre flight, those 20 minutes from Tite to Bissau, across swamp and river and probably a few enemy units huddled in the daytime protection of some of the larger clusters of jungle. The helicopter swung low over the jungle to avoid being sniped at from the surrounding bush. Not for nothing had a few foreign correspondents recently in the country referred to this West African patchwork quilt of jungle and rice paddy as Africa's own Vietnam.

A deep sadness pervaded Bissau's Bissalanca airport, with its rows of snub-nosed Fiat G-91 jet fighters and vintage Harvard T-6s drawn up in echelon on the tarmac. Huge crowds of mourners were gathered in the road beyond the security fence.

The entire civilian and military population had turned out to greet the body of the hero as it was brought into town, his coffin draped ceremoniously with the flag of Portugal, a mantle so large it splayed out over the back of the truck. A train of military and private trucks and cars a mile long followed behind at walking pace. Two outriders led the way. But there was no need to clear the route; the crowds stood grim, silent, and respectful, away from the road. With characteristic full-blooded Iberian emotion, men--black and white--cried like boys when he passed.

There are not many reports of what happened across the border in the Republic of Guinea when the news of the Portuguese captain's death came through that night. It was from there that the ambush unit had originally set out and it was in that direction that they returned after the mission had been accomplished.

Some reports indicate that many of the younger guerrillas had danced in the streets of Conakry, Boke, and Koundara in Guinea, and Ziguinchor in Senegal to the north, for Bacar's name had become synonymous for all that Portugal's presence in Africa stood for. Now the frightening and powerful symbol was gone and they rejoiced.

But there was also some hushed talk and a certain undefined reverence for Bacar, particularly among some of the older guerrilla

veterans. They remembered him well, for they had often crossed swords with this seasoned fighter. They respected his guile and tenacity, though they hated the man for what he represented. At the same time, however, he was still one of them--in their native idiom, a man of the soil and of Africa.

More important, his courage spoke the language often only understood by adversaries of long standing, especially in a war that has its own code of ethics and where the fighters are merely the pawns of other people's ideals.

II

A BACKGROUND TO THE WAR

If you allow anyone to stoke up a boiler until the steam-pressure rises beyond danger point, the real responsibility for any resultant explosion will lie with you. That truth of physical science applies equally to political science--especially to the conduct of international affairs.

Sir Basil Liddell Hart

The steadily escalating confrontation which finally killed Captain Joao Bacar has come a long way from the sporadic, indecisive clashes along the frontiers of Portuguese Guinea which marked its start almost a decade ago. The advent of uhuru in Africa in the fifties had brought in its train the sanguine and often fire-tinged nationalism and rhetoric of Touré, Banda, Mandela, and Nkrumah. The black masses of the continent rose to the occasion willingly. Freedom was theirs.

Nor were the indigenes of Portuguese Guinea--nestling almost snugly a little farther up the west coast of Africa, between the Republic of Guinea (Conakry) and Senghor's Senegal--to be out-done of their share of the spoils of independence, whatever they were. The prospect of immediate freedom was all around them. It had lapped across Africa like an all-embracing new religion, a fetish, and the men and women of Bissau, Bafata, Nova Lamego, Cacine, Teixeira Pinto, Farim, and even Buruntuma on the eastern extreme of this Switzerland-sized enclave, like their brothers in Lagos, Accra, and Nairobi, wanted their part of it.

In the early sixties Britain and France had shown the way by granting independence to more than two dozen of their colonial scions. Politically they had all but abdicated on the "Dark Continent," as a few of the more conservative newspapers in London, Paris, and Brussels still termed it.

Everyone in Africa, Europe, and even the Americas had expected Portugal to follow suit. Initially, a little tardiness was anticipated, perhaps, as was the case with Belgium and later, Spain, but certainly nothing as resolute as the utterances made by President

Salazar when the question of independence for the "Overseas Provinces" was first mooted.

The Portuguese premier spelt it out in graphic, simple terms which left few misconceptions. Portugal, he said, with characteristic stern dogmatism in a radio broadcast to the nation, had been in Africa for five centuries. Britain and France and the other colonial powers had barely survived 100 years. Nothing would persuade Portugal to relinquish control of the territories which were as much a part of Metropolitan Portugal as the Traz os Montes and Braganca north of Lisbon, or the Algarve to the south.

And, surprisingly, that is exactly what visitors to Angola, Guinea, and Moçambique are still told today by the Portuguese authorities when they question Continental remote control.

The black leaders on this island-fringed tropical spit of land took the initiative from the start. A small band of disaffected African intellectuals, mostly educated at Portugal's Coimbra or Lisbon universities and thereafter granted "most privileged" Assimilado status, first requested that Portugal withdraw from the territory in the late fifties.

A year later the same nationalists--this time with some of them in self-imposed exile--were issuing decrees from Conakry in the neighbouring Republic of Guinea. Portugal, they said, should get out of "our Guiné-Bissau" immediately. They demanded that Lisbon hand over the reins of nationhood to the African population of about 600,000.

The government wanted none of it. And when these demands met with no response the black leaders tried intimidation. If Portugal were not to withdraw, they warned, arms would be taken up against it. At the same time local black workers were urged to embark on a programme of civil disobedience. The Portuguese reacted with unrestrained vigour to maintain the status quo. Only after some of the dissident Africans had been gunned down by Portuguese police during a violent strike for higher wages at Pidjiguiti docks in downtown Bissau on August 3, 1959--a date subsequently immortalised by the guerrillas--did the prospect of a military confrontation seriously enter the picture for the young nationalists. Full-scale war followed three years later in January, 1963. It has continued ever since.

Political sentiments among the African community of Portuguese

Guinea had been fanned since the early fifties as the awareness of vast political potentials for the black man gradually took root in East and West Africa. Informed observers in West Africa might easily have predicted the pattern of events which followed in the three zones under Portuguese control, however. The Lisbon authorities, already overly sensitive on the question of political rights among the white Metropolitan population in a country dominated by the authoritarian dictatorship of Salazar, was hardly likely to sanction unrestricted political activity among their black citizens in Africa.

This did not prevent a number of fragmentary nationalist organisations being formed by the young firebrands in Bissau and the few who had already sought political sanctuary further afield. Most of this activity was, of necessity, underground. From 1956 there were a handful of organisations launched by this young leader and that. Only two were able to stand the test of time.

The first was Amilcar Cabral's PAIGC, which is generally regarded as the most potent and successful black guerrilla organisation in the territory today. It is also probably one of the most efficient in Africa, for, in terms of its military successes, it stands head and shoulders above Moçambique's already fragmented Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), or Aghostino Neto's MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola), which operates mainly in the eastern and northern sectors of Angola.

The other Guinean movement is FLING (Frente para a Libertação e Independência da Guiné Portuguesa). Based in Dakar, FLING is composed of at least four united nationalist movements and is regarded by the Portuguese and the West as somewhat more moderate than the strongly socialist-oriented PAIGC.

Both groups, nevertheless, have as their common denominator the determination that Portugal must be ousted, whatever the means. Both also underwrite the violence which followed in view of what they term "Lisbon's intransigence." Only in questions of policy has there been no harmony. This included overall leadership, timing of the takeover, and the eventual nature of government which they hope to implement on the territory once the "foreigners" have been ousted.

FLING has indicated that it would not be insensitive to the possibility of some kind of loose economic and cultural alliance or federation with Portugal, similar to that in operation between, for instance, the

Ivory Coast or Cameroun and France. PAIGC has its own views on this matter. Africa, PAIGC's leaders militantly maintain, is black, not European. Moreover, the PAIGC standpoint is intent on an essentially socialist type of government along Cuban or Algerian lines with all facets of government, including politics, economics, and military affairs, answerable to the Party and the Party alone. Here Cabral clearly learnt much from men like Sékou Touré of Guinea, and Castro, both of whom, in their respective ways, influenced this guerrilla leader's thinking.

But in spite of differences, the two organisations do cooperate while they face the common enemy. Apart from military activity they have also ventured on a joint propaganda campaign which, amongst other things, regularly draws attention to the monopolistic nature of commerce, trade, and industry in Guiné-Bissau. Their target here has consistently been the giant capitalist economic cartels, Banco Nacional Ultramarino and the Companhia Uniao Frabril (CUF).

Both these firms maintain vast economic holdings in Metropolitan Portugal as well as the Overseas Provinces and have played a forceful role in the course the wars have followed in these regions, mainly through powerful family connections at the highest governmental levels in Lisbon.

Until matters got out of hand in Portuguese Guinea, CUF literally ruled the economic roost in the country. Virtually all trade passed through the books of the company and, as in Angola until quite recently, no foreign or domestic business was brooked unless it had first been sanctioned by CUF. Then it was invariably conducted through company channels, suitably "dressed" with the necessary percentage rakeoffs.

The company also had the influence to establish market prices as well as buying and selling rates for local commodities. It was usually those who had least, the peasants, who fared worst in the final deal.

The company did well, so well, in fact, that there are many in Bissau today who maintain that CUF was loathe to suspend commercial operations in the face of the growing military confrontation. They argue that had it not been for the sway held by CUF, Lisbon might long ago have abdicated from this corner of Africa. But that state of affairs has changed. So have the wider implications of the struggle, and at the present time the Companhia Uniao Frabril is very much of a secondary factor in the military equation now being deployed by Bissau.

The war in Portuguese Guinea is a grim, often frightening struggle, incorporating the most sophisticated counter-insurgency and guerrilla methods devised by man since the Spanish perfected the art against Napoleon almost two centuries ago. Because of the small size of the territory and its almost uniform, cruel terrain--impenetrable swampland and rain forests along the coast where the tides sweep inland daily for nearly half the length of the country, the land then rising slowly to the sub-Saharan Savannah plain in the interior--much of what has been learnt of modern unorthodox warfare in Malaya, Cuba, Algeria, and, more recently, Indo-China, has been put into grisly effect by the contesting forces.

Ideals have changed radically since the early days. While the campaign was launched by the black nationalists with characteristic cry and clatter of "anti-imperialism" and "exploitation of the poor by the rich colonials," and the Portuguese, for their part, retaliated with equal fervour for what they succinctly termed "Christ and Country," Portuguese Guinea in its current phase has become the focus of a basic struggle between the forces of east and west.

A strong but not altogether convincing argument is regularly used by Lisbon for the defence of this otherwise uneconomic stretch of West Africa which has cost the country many more lives to defend than, for instance, the highly viable and settled Moçambique province or the central farming regions of Angola to the south. Portugal maintains that it is not only the mainland enclave that the communist-backed guerrillas are after, but also the ten offshore Cape Verde Islands which lie out in the Atlantic about 600 miles to the west. This measure of intent, they say, is indicated by the title of the guerrilla movement. They go further. Mr. Caetano maintains that this West African war is only a part of a massive strategic pattern on the part of Moscow and Peking to encircle all of Africa.

The pattern, they reckon, is simple. China is already ensconced in East Africa. Mao has full access to the Tanzanian Indian Ocean port of Dar es Salaam. His thousands of "advisors" and railroad builders have penetrated well into the interiors of Zambia and Tanzania. Russia meanwhile controls the entrances to the Red Sea through Yemen (formerly Aden) at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula and the Egyptian side of the Suez Canal. Somalia's new military junta has also recently come within the Soviet orbit. Following the recent Indo-Pakistani war, Russia is likely to be offered further facilities on the Indian Ocean.

To cap it all, southern Africa is in the grip of two guerrilla wars in

Moçambique and Angola, and less intense struggles in Rhodesia and Caprivi. As with Portuguese Guinea, the freedom fighters operating in the southern sphere all have substantial moral and material support from communist sources. Should they be successful down south and on the west coast of Africa, Portugal calculates, Africa will have been completely encircled by forces antagonistic towards the west; more so if they take the crescent-shaped Cape Verde Islands as well.

As the islands lie on the westward "bulge" of Africa, across the trade routes between the east and west, the long-term strategic implications for the western trading nations are obvious, not to speak of the threat to Europe's oil supplies which pass this way from the Persian Gulf, Nigeria, and Cabinda.

For South Africa the prospect is more than serious. Sal Island, one of the Cape Verde group, is regularly used by South African Airways on its daily flights to and from Europe.

There is substance to this argument, though it is clear to anyone who has visited the barren and remote Cape Verde Islands that taking them militarily would be a vastly different and more complex proposition than fighting an extended guerrilla war across conveniently-placed and often ill-defined "friendly" frontiers. However, the deeper implications of Portugal's strategic argument does have a camp following. This is indicated by the substantial support Portugal receives from abroad in its continuing military struggle in Africa.

The military line-up in Portuguese Guinea is a strategist's exercise in contrasts. Mustered militarily in two opposing camps are the Portuguese on one hand, who have the material though discreet support of much of Europe, their NATO allies, including the United States, and a variety of western-oriented nations on both sides of the Atlantic. On the other side PAIGC is unequivocally backed by Russia, China, Cuba, Algeria, and most East European states, all channelling their multifarious aid through Sékou Touré's Marxist-oriented oligarchy. More succour for the guerrillas, especially from the moderate liberal nations such as Sweden, Canada, Ethiopia, and a sprinkling of altruistic-minded church, commercial, and philanthropic organisations in the United States, enters through "neutralist" Senegal, farther north.

There were racial aspects present in this war from the start. In the

beginning the war for the Portuguese took the nature of a largely black-white confrontation. Over the years, however, Lisbon gradually relegated colour to a position of secondary importance, mainly out of economic considerations. The Portuguese have also relied increasingly on the services of black African volunteers. Bacar was one of these.

The only white faces in the ranks of the guerrillas are their Cuban and Russian advisors and the very occasional Portuguese defector who has been incorporated into PAIGC ranks. In the eyes of the organisation's Central Committee, a white Portuguese will always be a white Portuguese. Nothing else. Though his intentions may be sincere and honest on deserting, his mettle, PAIGC maintains, is better tempered outside the fighting zone, preferably behind the Iron Curtain or within the control of the exiled, communist-dominated Frente Patrioca de Libertacao Nacional (FPLN), headquartered in Algiers. A perpetual preoccupation with matters relating to security is one trait the PAIGC appears to have inherited from its former colonial overlord.

Cuba has been active. This was underscored not long ago by the capture of an officer of the regular Cuban Army, Captain Pedro Rodriguez Peralta, who was taken prisoner by Portuguese forces after being wounded in a battle in the Guilege region of Portuguese Guinea in early 1970. Peralta was sentenced to two years imprisonment by a military court in Lisbon in May, 1971.

Then there are the always discreet and circumspect North Vietnamese who have remained very much on the periphery of battle in the past few years. There have been many rumours of their presence in this war--linguagewise they fit in admirably on this primarily francophone coast--but their activity was only recently highlighted when the British journalist and historian, Basil Davidson, identified two of them in his book on the war.¹ The men were named as Tran Hoai-nam and Pham Van Than, both of the Liberation Front of South Vietnam (Vietcong). According to Davidson, Hoai-nam is a veteran member of the Central Committee of this organisation.

Washington, too, has played its hand. It has granted Portugal the right to buy and use Boeing passenger jets as military troop carriers for its African wars, a concession previously denied Lisbon, even

¹ The Liberation of Guinea: Basil Davidson. Penguin, 1969.



French Alouette helicopter guarded by a British Daimler "Dingo" armoured car at Tite airport.



Portuguese soldiers on a German-built Unimog troop carrier.

as a partner-member of NATO. First reports indicate that Portugal has bought two Boeing 707s and one three-jet Boeing 727 with options on more aircraft if required.

Other countries which have recently shown an interest in this grim war of attrition, which has cost Portugal about 1,200 military fatalities to date (and another 2,000 men who have died of illness or accident), are Algeria, Egypt, and Nigeria. The latter entrant is a surprising one considering that Lagos not too long ago extricated itself from a crippling three-year civil war in Biafra. General Gowon has obviously not been allowed to forget Portuguese aid to Biafra by his war lords, particularly the use of the offshore West African island of Sao Tomé which was used as a base by Joint Church Aid for supplying General Ojukwu's starving millions.

Consequently, it did not come as all that much of a surprise to hear reports in early 1971 of Nigerian pilots flying sorties across Portuguese Guinea in Russian-supplied Mig-17s which are based in Conakry. The month I visited Bissau the jets buzzed Bissau twice. The flights, I was told, were for reconnaissance purposes and for that reason the Portuguese Air Force jets based at Bissau were reticent to intercept for fear of escalating the struggle still further. The Portuguese were concerned enough about the possibility of aerial attack to institute a number of anti-aircraft measures in and around Bissau shortly afterwards. While I was still in the town in April, 1971, a number of black out and air raid exercises were held.

The weapons these two adversaries are using also reflect extraneous interests. While the guerrillas are armed with the best Soviet and Chinese hardware available--including the ubiquitous AK-47 Kalashnikov and the full range of RPG rockets and heat grenades, as well as a variety of mines at present in use in Southeast Asia--Portugal retaliates with mainly western equipment.

Lisbon's standard weapon is the German-designed G-3 carbine which is used in all its African theatres of war. Metropolitan and African troops use captured Russian and Chinese equipment in preference to their own whenever they can get them. Other items include stubby-nosed British Daimler armoured cars; World War 2 vintage Harvard T-6 fighters, which are considered by American specialists to be only second to the helicopter in efficacy in anti-insurgency operations; Italian-designed Fiat G-91 jet strike aircraft; West German Dornier Do-27 spotter and light support planes, as well as NATO-type Noratlas transporters, together with enough American drugs and

pharmaceuticals to supply three armies the size of Portugal's in Africa. But more of the involvement of foreign powers and equipment used later.

If the nature and mechanics of this war are interesting, the fortunes of the two opposing factions are more so. Almost unknown to the rest of the world, apart from a few informed Africanists who make it their business to keep themselves abreast of events, the battle in Portuguese Guinea has raged for most of the past decade.

One of the reasons for the news blackout is the reticence on the part of the Portuguese to allow newsmen in to cover the conflict. As with Moçambique and Angola the press has only recently been allowed to see what they have wanted to, but then it usually takes months to organise a journalist's visa to any one of the war zones.

The fortunes of both sides engaged in the struggle have see-sawed haphazardly with Portugal's standing on the international front. In the early years it all went rather badly for Lisbon. Things deteriorated steadily until about the middle-sixties. At that stage Lisbon's shares were at their lowest when Salazar's stringent and often misdirected controls from abroad were hardest. Only when he was replaced by the more liberal Prime Minister Caetano, who promised a relaxed, openhanded regime, did conditions start to improve. The ebb and flow had been marginal, but the edge, it seems, had always been largely in favour of the guerrillas. Until recently, it would not be untrue to say, PAIGC's spirited fighters took the initiative from the Portuguese on just about every front.

Within a year of the first isolated FLING attacks on Susana and Verela on the northwest Senegalese border in late 1962, the Portuguese High Command had admitted that the terrorists controlled about 15 percent of the country. The statement, a bit of a blunder on the part of the usually tight-lipped Portuguese propaganda machine at the time, was widely reported abroad and used to considerable advantage by Cabral in soliciting aid for his movement. Cabral later admitted that even he was not aware how successful he had been until the Portuguese told him.

But the 1962 fracas was only a foretaste of things to come and the attacks in the north were regarded as little more than civilian disturbances. Though war was never formally declared, the real conflagration is regarded by both sides as having started with an attack on Tite, Buba, and Fulacunda in January, 1963.

Tite at the time contained a headquarters battalion composed of two companies under the command of a major. Buba and Fulacunda were garrisoned by one company each. Only one Portuguese soldier was wounded at Tite, although the guerrillas did manage to destroy the base ammunition dump. The next day the guerrillas ambushed a car traveling between Tite and Fulacunda, killing all its occupants. At the same time they attacked a small section of Portuguese soldiers on patrol near a village to the east of Tite. In this action two Portuguese soldiers were killed. From here on in things became serious, both for Lisbon and Cabral and his band of insurgents.

Two years later Cabral claimed that the area of territory under his "control" had risen to 50 percent. Today the PAIGC maintains that all but the final 20 percent of the country around the capital is theirs. They have not yet claimed the offshore Bijagos archipelago. The islands have always been famous for their indigenous carvings and have remained almost entirely out of the war.

PAIGC's leaders are emphatic in claiming that the 80 percent which they say is theirs, is theirs to "control" and do in it what they want. Cabral made the same statement when I met him at the 1971 Organisation of African Unity summit meeting in Addis Ababa. There, he told me, he only had to take Bissau and he would have the "entire country in his pocket." The first time he made that claim was in 1965. PAIGC is still making it.

Foreign correspondents who have entered Portuguese Guinea have to a large extent disputed this claim. Most estimates made in the past three years have opted for considerably less; usually about 50 percent "dominated" by PAIGC as opposed to "controlled." The nuance is stronger in the latter.

There is no doubt that in some regions the Portuguese prefer the safety of their camps and fortified villages after dark. But as I observed during my own sojourn, there are large areas where movement at night is unrestricted and free of control. I went into them myself, often uneasy, full of trepidation, and expecting the worst from what I had heard abroad, but was soon calmed by the nonchalance of my often-unarmed Portuguese hosts. I doubt whether they did this in moments of bravado, or perhaps to give the effect to this visiting correspondent that the war was not as widespread as was believed abroad, but at the same time I cannot believe they would have stuck their--and my own--necks out simply to make a point. The Portuguese are as interested in longevity as I am, and the reason for the casual

approach in certain regions was that the possibility of attack was remote. These areas included Teixeira Pinto, Bafata, Catio, and Nova Lamego in the east. Most of these places are claimed by the PAIGC as under its control.

In contrast, there were other sectors in the enclave where I did not feel safe even with an 80-man heavily-armed escort. In all areas, however, the Portuguese have complete air supremacy during daylight hours, which they use to ruthless advantage.

The most recent visits to Portuguese Guinea undertaken by foreign journalists, apart from myself, include two Americans, Jim Hoagland of the Washington Post and Peter Webb of Newsweek Magazine, both in 1971, and the West German Africa war veterans, Peter Hannes Lehmann and Herd Heideman of Stern magazine. These men are generally in accordance with my own views--that there are few zones actually "held" by the black guerrillas. Rather, one gains the impression, as I did, that the guerrilla presence, in line with Mao's theories on the subject of unconventional warfare, is inclined towards a peripatetic existence, striking at one position today and another tomorrow and so on, but making few hard gains with intent to hold on to a region in the face of enemy counterattacks. Peter Webb, who went in with the Portuguese for his magazine in December, 1971, had this to say when he came out: "After a week of traveling around Guinea I have little doubt that the Portuguese troops can go wherever they wish, though they often have to travel in armed convoys... It also seemed to me that the PAIGC's claims of popularity were wildly exaggerated."

Basil Davidson's observations in 1967 tallied with Cabral's, but then Davidson does not even concede that the Portuguese have put up a stiff resistance, in spite of the fact that Lisbon is waging three separate and remote wars in Africa on a national defence budget totalling barely \$460 million annually, or a fraction of what America spent each year on its one war in Asia. And considering that they have been fighting for 12 years in Angola and almost 10 in Moçambique, and that the guerrillas have not yet taken a single town, Lisbon is not doing too bad. But then Davidson saw things from a very different perspective while with the guerrillas, as I did while with the Portuguese. Things have also changed from the heady days of 1967 when General Arnaldo Schulz held precarious sway over Portugal's fast diminishing fortunes in this war. Since then a new man has taken command in Portuguese Guinea. His name is General Antonio de Spínola, and like his predecessor, Schulz, he distinguished himself

in Angola. Although Spínola has shocked the old established order with his almost revolutionary approach towards guerrilla warfare, he is, like his contemporary on the Indian Ocean, General Kaulza de Arriaga, achieving results for the first time in this hectic, still undecided struggle.

One of the conditions imposed by Spínola on being offered the Guinea command was that he would have overall control of the country without any direct supervision from Lisbon. He is also reported to have insisted that he be allowed to choose his own staff officers. Both requests were granted by the Portuguese War Ministry which is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the fortunes of war have finally turned in favour of Lisbon.

The first major change insisted on by General Spínola reflected his grasp of matters military in the guerrilla sphere of operations. Following the example of Sir Gerald Templar in Malaya in 1952, he assumed absolute responsibility for both civilian and military organisations in the disputed enclave. This has proved an immense asset in his bid to come to grips with the "liberation organisation." It has also sliced through the usual bureaucratic red tape and inter-departmental hostility which, until then, had become symptomatic of the Portuguese war effort in Guinea.

Although Schulz, in his time, had been both civil and military governor of the region in name, his hands were in effect tied by Lisbon's filibusters in many of the plans he tried to put into operation. Looking back one can only conclude that the fault was his for tolerating such a situation in the face of a steadily deteriorating military front.

Another feature of Spínola's rule is the implementation of many long overdue socio-economic reforms. The changes for the better have come late, perhaps too late for Portugal in an increasingly hostile Africa. But in the final analysis of this war Spínola is in the present phase stealing much of PAIGC's thunder, for they, too, have promised changes but have been prevented by the war from implementing them.

The mass of the people in Portuguese Guinea on which both sides count for their support are basically passive and unsophisticated in their ideals. These black people are tired of war. For them the immediate environment of their homes and villages matters more than some alien hocus pocus, whether it is offered by the Portuguese or the scientific-socialism proffered by the PAIGC. All they are interested in is being able to cultivate their land, send their children

to school, and have a doctor and clinic nearby if either are needed.

These are the things that have been promised. And if nothing is forthcoming from an organisation, then these same simple people tend towards the opposite polarity to see their hopes fulfilled. And right now it is not brickbats that are being hurled at Spínola by the black Guineans.

III

BISSAU: CENTREPOINT OF THE WAR

Without a political goal, guerrilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation, and assistance cannot be gained. The essence of guerrilla warfare is thus revolutionary in character.

Mao Tse-tung

Because of its size, Bissau, capital of Portuguese Guinea, can hardly be called a city. But it is--though only 40,000 people regard this town which the Portuguese first settled five centuries ago as their home--about double the number at the start of hostilities in 1963.

Even so, this island settlement--it is separated from the mainland by a shallow canal--which superseded the port of Bolama farther south as principle town in 1941, is a modest, listless place, typical of the Portuguese centres one finds in some of the remoter regions of Lisbon's African empire.

With its central cathedral dominating the scene for miles around, pavement cafes, plump, dark-haired Iberian wives waving at one another from their balconies, and the ever-smiling bootblacks who pester you long after you have paid your single escudo and had your shoes polished with much ceremony and banter to a mirror-like glaze, it could easily be compared with Luso in Eastern Angola near the Zambian frontier or with Tete in Moçambique. Only the climate, the intense humidity, and the quaint waterfront setting are different. So is that intrinsicity which remains at the core of West Africa's exuberant temperament. One does not find this quality elsewhere, either in the east or in the southern or central segments of the continent.

In West Africa, the city Bissau most closely resembles is Bathurst, capital of the former British colony of Gambia, about 100 miles up the coast. The same brand of enervating heat pervades the sticky atmosphere, which greets you like a steaming, clammy dishcloth about the face the moment you step off the aircraft. There is the

same sort of lethargy about the townspeople. They amble about their business, dragging one foot reluctantly after the other, often preferring to rest a few moments in the shadows before crossing the street once more. Or they spend hours talking aimlessly about yesterday's weather, which is the same as today's and almost certainly tomorrow's, before getting down to the grit of business, such as it is in these parts.

Here and there in the multi-coloured crowds one picks out traces of the same Creole and pidgin that is spoken in Bathurst and sometimes heard in Freetown, Sierra Leone, a couple of hours away by plane. There is movement between Gambia and Portuguese Guinea, but it is limited to about one boat a week outside the rainy season, usually through Cacheu in the north, on the Senagalese border.

Even the architectural layout of the two conurbations is similar. Bissau's waterfront is spreadeagled across the lower or "downtown" region. Strange picturesque hotels, looking more like mysterious mansions out of a Graham Greene novel, are stuck away behind clusters of mangrove and bougainvillea on what little higher ground there is on this rehabilitated marsh which Africa has gradually won back from the sea with the help of the annual silt flood from the interior.

The roads, too, all lead to one central square somewhere near the docks. This layout appears to be the norm in West Africa, for one finds it also in Accra, Bathurst, and Dakar. They call it the colonial touch, and it is regarded as a legacy of some long-forgotten regiment of town planners in Paris and London, few of whom had probably ever seen Africa, much less lived there.

As far as Bissau's African community is concerned, it is in the vicinity of Pidjiguiti docks where most things happen. Here, near the flamboyant, raucous market, the town is a bustle of movement and activity from daybreak to sundown, with black and white faces outnumbered by the tawny complexions of mulatto traders and fishermen crowding ashore through the well-guarded harbour gates.

Photography in this area, which had been the scene of the 1959 massacre, was strictly forbidden, even in 1971, I had been warned beforehand. This was a pity, as the area was one of the most colourful to be found anywhere along the coast. Here the "mammies" can be seen trading in a thousand items of everyday use: corn, flour, cloth, stinking dried fish which turns brown in the sun and which is regarded

as a West African gourmet's delight, birds' eggs, rusty tins of canned milk, vegetables and fuel and cooking oils in battered old paraffin tins. There is also the inevitable West African palm wine available in a variety of bottles and casks, some of which look as if they had survived a century of use. It is a potent drink which gets stronger the longer it is left in the sun and will knock the unsuspecting imbibor flat on his back after the second cupful, even though locals drink it by the pint, usually starting with the first meal of the day.

The other major centre in Bissau is the market which combines a succession of tiny sales kiosks with the local fresh meat, fish, and vegetable store. Because of the heat and the lack of refrigeration, it is considered wise to buy early.

The market also has its secrets. In this large shaded building with half a dozen exits and entrances, one can buy Ashanti gold dust and nuggets, and diamonds brought across overland from Ghana and Sierra Leone and smuggled into the country God knows how considering the country is surrounded by its enemies. Or you can buy a shark, whole and gutted for the equivalent of a dollar and do what you will with it. Shark flesh is a delicacy in these parts among the indigenes. They eat every part of the predator except the entrails which are used to catch other sharks. There are some tribes in the interior which use these leftovers to make a powerful, pungent soup which they believe has remarkable revitalising attributes, particularly for old men who have recently taken young wives.

Here, too, Fula and Hausa traders from the north match wits with townsfolk selling everything from a pair of shoes to a witchdoctor's¹ potion which will exorcise a wandering spirit in a tabanca.

The gold and silver filigree work they display behind glass-covered cabinets and trays is intricate and often reflects superb craftsmanship, reminiscent of similar items which were once on sale in Zanzibar before Peking helped drive out many of the traditional Arab gold and silversmiths.

And for those who want them there are also ebony carvings such as one finds at most airports along the west coast of Africa. Most of it is stereotyped. But the wood has been well worked and sometimes it is possible to find a good piece at a reasonable price if you're interested in that sort of thing. So, too, is the odd item of carved ivory, though Bissau boasts nothing as outstanding as the works of

¹ African village

art one often sees in Abidjan, or farther east in the markets of Douala and Yaounde in the Cameroun Republic.

The bartering is a constant jumble of noise and dialects, interspersed only here and there by the colloquial Portuguese of young Metropolitan housewives--mostly the spouses of traders--who have come to do the morning shopping. Military wives rarely go to the market themselves; few officers' women have less than two servants.

Another sound--it is sometimes an echo, which one picks up clearly after a few moments in the hollow shell of a building--is the unmistakable ascetic cry of the Koran being chanted in Arabic by some faraway Imam. The high-pitched voice comes over in starts as Cairo Radio or Radio Algiers fades and then picks up again. The lips of the devout hardly miss a verse as they follow the Imam's example in a silent but rather abstract mime. The presence of Islam is distinct and perhaps a little incongruous in this staunchly Catholic land, but then in this respect the Portuguese have been more tolerant than their European neighbours. Lisbon's hierarchy was trying to learn to live with other people's creeds when the Inquisition was at its worst.

A stone's throw from the harbour is the original old fort built centuries ago by the descendents of the legendary globe-trotting navigators when Lisbon's kings finally decided to "pacify" this coast in a bid to capture a portion of the meandering Sahara trade from the north. They settled here--on the Rio Fresco, near present-day Dakar; at Mitombo farther south; and at a number of points along the coast between Ghana and Nigeria before heading south around the Cape. Their principal base along the entire seaboard was Arguim Island off Mauritania which became an entrepot for the slave trade and which only lapsed into insignificance with the rise of transatlantic trade.

Granite-walled, low-lying, and speckled with cannon running the gamut of 500 years of Portuguese ordnance, this is Spinola's military headquarters in the war. He rarely uses it, preferring to work at the more stately Governor's residence. The general does, however, join his staff officers regularly at seven each evening for a run-through of the day's events in the fort's map-lined conference room.

But in spite of this activity--rumbustious early on in the day and easing to a steady hum after a lunch when most of the population beds down to a three-hour siesta--there is an undefined tension in the streets of Bissau which is not easily fathomed at first. It is almost

as if something is about to happen. The people, though no different from those of any other African city, are strained, a little more tense and tired than one would have expected at this fulcrum of Portugal's military might on the west coast. They are sombre and serious for much of their day. There are few wisecracks as one walks between the rows of huge, spreading mango trees which line Avenida 5 de Outubro or the majestic Avenida da Republica closer to the main business centre.

Here, between the yellowing, moss-covered old structures which reflect more than their share of 19th century colonial charm, the people rarely smile as they pass a stranger. Rather, you are not accorded more than a cursory glance as you pass and when your eyes briefly meet, those of the others' turn, almost afraid of a genial gesture that may signify a greeting. To be fair, though, Portuguese Guinea has not yet lapsed into the hopeless melancholy I found in most urban centres in the Republic of Guinea farther south, for it is clear to any observer that Touré's brand of African Marxism has been hard on the people; harder certainly than that meted out by the oft-times ruthless though usually avuncular Lusitanians.

Though the people of Bissau are subdued--some say detached--they do come into their own once the sun has disappeared in a flurry of colours over the Atlantic beyond. Then, hundreds of dark-skinned white-collar workers and brown-uniformed messengers gather round their favourite open-air cafes and bars as they do in Lisbon and Oporto and sink a few for the road. The drink is mostly Vinho Verde which sells locally at a few escudos a bottle. It is a good wine and the local blacks here drink it readily in preference to the stronger palm wine or pombe relished elsewhere in tropical Africa.

Among this mass of civilians there are always the troops in their khaki-green camouflage uniforms and rubber army boots. The men, out on an evening's furlough, move about mostly on foot, usually in pairs, traipsing from one bar to another in search of the off-beat and mixing easily with the locals and their women. Others travel about the city on bicycles, scooters, or on the troop-carrier bus which plies regularly each hour between town and some distant barrack on the airport road.

Here and there army jeeps scurry about on official business, rarely stopping at an intersection and often moving at breakneck speed in built up areas. This blatantly obvious lack of road discipline which one also sees so often in the Metropolis may be one of the reasons why

Portugal loses almost as many men in road accidents as it does in the field.

The jeeps with right-hand drive steering columns catch the eye immediately. They look out of place in streets full of cars traveling on the right, continental fashion, with their drivers sitting on the far side of the vehicle. It is only afterwards, when your questions on the subject have been pointedly ignored, that you realise South Africa, like Britain, still sticks to the left-hand side of the road. Closer inspection when the opportunity allows reveals that many of these army utility cars still have their bilingual South African instruction panels alongside the speedometer detailing gear changes in relation to speed.

Traffic in Bissau is not always hectic. The first sight which greeted my arrival was a military cortege crawling towards the centre city area from the airport. The body of a dead marine had been brought in by helicopter that morning. He had been killed during the night in an action near Buba, I was told, and would be buried later that day. Corpses are rarely left longer than a day in this stifling heat.

As with Bacar, who followed the same route a few weeks later, the marine's plain wooden coffin was draped with a green and red Portuguese flag as the 20-vehicle convoy moved at a snail's pace down the long, straight tarred road into Bissau. A few curious spectators--Fula and Mandingo traders, "mammies" and a host of children--watched the scene as it passed. It was clear they had witnessed this spectacle often for they continued with their long business harangues and discussions under the tall pepper trees even before the convoy was out of sight. The women, in brightly-hued tie-dye sarongs, squatting knees apart before their tiny curb-side stalls were equally impervious. Before them, laid out in neat little rows, was their stock for the day: peanuts in a ragged pile, a few matches, clusters of oranges and green mangoes and, as always, the single cigarettes in well-worn condensed milk tins from which the tops had been neatly sliced off and the jagged edges worn down. Like their menfolk they barely took the time to look up as the convoy of death rolled past.

For their part, the solid, sober faces of the Portuguese soldiers who formed the guard of honour did justice to the occasion. They, too, seemed to have grown accustomed to their role, but their stiff uniforms and heavy webbing must have been constricting in the enervating heat, even though it was still early.

The Portuguese men looked aggressive in spite of the occasion. One of their number had been killed at the hand of a black enemy, and here were blacks all about them, even within their own ranks. The enemy was black, but so were many of these people who lived and died within earshot of the barracks and who depended on these foreign soldiers for succour and protection. So were many of Portugal's allies in the war that knows no formal boundaries. The observer who comes to see the battle for himself can only speculate.

* * * * *

Approaching Bissau from the air was always an experience. I did the trip often, for General Spínola was easy on the use of military aircraft by visiting foreign journalists. Flying in from the Cape Verde Islands the coast loomed up stark on the hazy African horizon ahead. A dozen tiny ribbons of rivers snaked crazily through the low-lying swampland approaches. The pattern was uniform, broken sporadically by the squares and triangles of a hundred rice paddies spread out between the mangrove patches like angular, heavily-lined corduroy sheets.

The water below, even twenty miles out to sea, was a dirty, muddy brown. One sees the same when approaching the estuaries of the Congo and Niger rivers farther down the coast. Only occasionally was the rhythm broken by the obese, dark-stained sail of a nhominca, the Portuguese-type fishing boat which is in everyday use along this coast as far north as Mauritania. Centuries ago local fishermen in Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone adopted the protruding-keel design which tourists are more likely to associate with Estoril than Africa.

Bissau from the air was larger than expected. Again the resemblance to Bathurst was striking--both towns lying on a promontory facing open water--which is probably one of the reasons why a Russian-built Antonov transport plane, bearing the colours of the Guinea Air Force, landed at Bissau two years ago. The stocky aircraft had lost its way on a flight between Labe and Conakry in the Republic of Guinea and mistook Bissalanca for Bathurst. The crew apparently are still being held in Bissau, though Spínola did try to exchange them for some of his own prisoners-of-war captured by the PAIGC. Touré had rejected the offer out of hand.



An aerial view of Bissau.

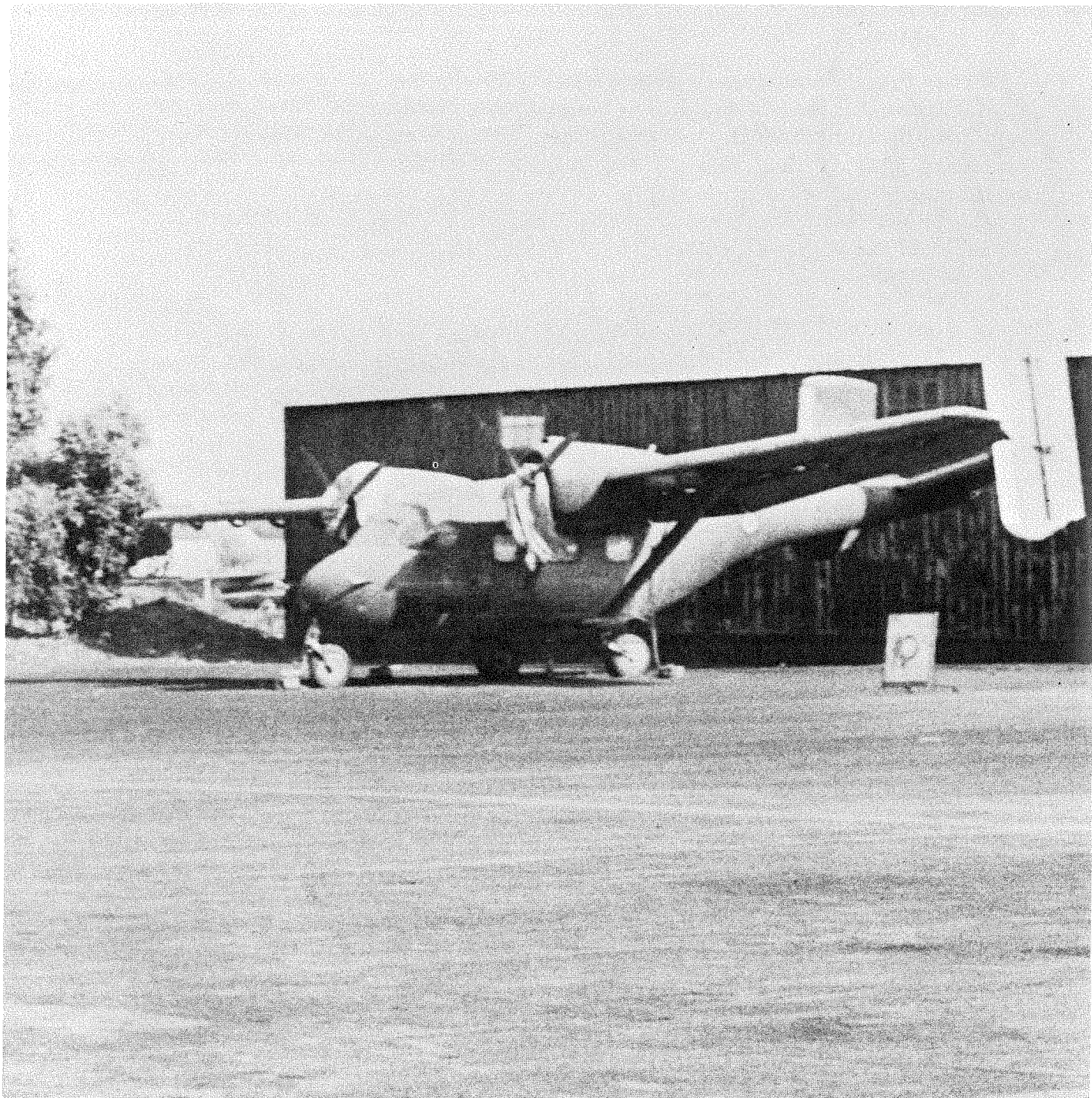
From the air the town is semicircular in shape. All roads leading out from the centre double back again on reaching the outskirts, as if, being nudged by the nearby jungle which surrounds Bissau, they swung back of their own accord into the urban perimeter. The diameter of the semi-circle takes the form of the waterfront along the broad Geba river estuary which stretches out, palm-fringed for most of the distance, towards the south and Buba and Cacine and Tite, where Bacar had his headquarters.

From the moss-covered concrete structures in the centre of Bissau the architectural pattern gradually peters out to a succession of mud-walled squatters' villages on the outskirts. The uniformity of it all was broken at irregular intervals by a row or two of barracks and workshops, each distinctive with their rows of open ground between twin barbed-wire fences. Machine gun turrets marked the corners of these drab defences, looking from where we flew a little like circular blobs on a more-than-detailed architect's plan.

Peeping out of the water beyond was the island base which lay off the town, rather apologetically, like a green swathe in a sea of khaki. The island was about half a mile across and was in use as a naval base. It was once a leprosarium. Visitors are not encouraged to step ashore.

Bissalanca Airport, about a dozen miles on the road north out of Bissau, is an impressive affair set across an otherwise uninteresting and flat countryside. I gained that impression on the first pass prior to landing. Alongside the heavy tarmac fortifications--rows of squat artillery pieces with their muzzles covered in canvas behind raised gunpits--were lined up about thirty aircraft, all in various stages of readiness for the morning operations. We had arrived early after an eighteen-hour flight from Lisbon. It was a long haul.

About ten Alouette helicopters and the same number of Fiat G-91 jets were concentrated at the far end of the airport, away from what one officer referred to as "the prying eyes of civilians who pass through en route to Europe and beyond." The Harvards and Dorniers--there were more of them--were parked closer to the terminal building. Their engine cowlings stood out bright against the dull tarmac, the day-glo orange coating reflecting sharply in the early morning sun. The colour, I was told, had something to do with identification and spotting in the event of one of the aircraft being forced down into the jungle. On its own pad nearby stood one of Bissau's two Noratlas transports. These NATO-type planes looked rather impressive in their wavy green



Russian-built Antonov transporter in Republic of Guinea colours stands at Bissau airport; it landed there by mistake.

and brown camouflage paint and were used for daily supply runs into the interior.

An interesting and unusual aircraft stood on its own in a bunker near the fringe of the airport cluster. This one was a jet, but with a long, low-slung silhouette contrasting readily with the stocky fighters around it. It was, incredibly enough, one of Britain's World War 2 Gloster Meteor fighters. On its fuselage, as if adding a rider to the riddle, were painted the words in large black capitals ENTERPRISE FILMS.

No photographs of this plane or of the Antonov were allowed "for security reasons," but it was inevitable that I should snap them eventually, as all my movements into the interior were through this airport.

The story about the Meteor goes like this: During the Biafran debacle Ojukwu ordered and paid for two jet aircraft from an international arms salesman. The jets were to replace the French Vantour bombers which he had intended using against Federal lines and which were destroyed on the ground outside Uli Airport by Nigerian Air Force Migs before they were ever put into use. Both Meteors were flown out of Britain illegally and headed south down the African coast for Nigeria.

The designers of the Meteor series, which first flew in 1943, had never intended the planes to be used in long-range operations. Half-way down the coast one of the aircraft developed engine trouble and had to be ditched into the sea. The other landed at Bissau and is still sitting there, like the Antonov, neglected, dilapidated, and more than an embarrassment for Mr. Caetano who only wishes to forget that Biafra ever existed.

Tackled on the subject of the Gloster Meteors during my visit, General Spinola refused to be drawn. As far as he was concerned, he said, the aircraft had made an emergency landing and that was that. It was not his concern where the plane had come from or was headed. The pilot, he maintained, had been repatriated shortly after he had landed and no one had claimed the jet. Enterprise Films was undoubtedly the cover organisation in Britain which handled the sale, ostensibly for use in a long-forgotten film on the battle for Europe. Legal action has since been taken by the British Government against the individuals responsible for the sale. They were convicted on the grounds that they had not declared the true purpose the Meteors were to be used for. The offence was a military one, the newspapers had concluded at the time.

On the question of holding the Antonov, General Spinola was even more vague. The plane belonged to the Republic of Guinea, he said, and for that reason he was not prepared to allow anyone to take photographs. It was not within his right to give permission. Apparently the restriction did not cover the bevy of western military attaches who toured Portuguese Guinea shortly before I arrived for an on-the-spot survey of the war. Not one of these men failed to take a photograph of the Russian transporter.

There is only one place for the few visitors who come to this corner of Africa to stay and that is the Grande Hotel, a rambling, stuccoed building edging well onto Avenida 5 de Outubro in the centre city area. Although Bissau boasts about half a dozen other hotels, it's "not done" to stay anywhere but at the Grande which is reserved for officers and the like. Other ranks have the Hotel Avenida, the Miramar, or the Intercontinental.

Mango trees rise up in a flourish of viridescence and shelter the Grande on all sides, giving the structure a deceptively cool appearance. In reality it is as hot on the broad covered porch as it is out on the pavement, but then there are seats and long cool drinks prepared by smartly attired stewards in their starched white ice-cream suits and that is what one pays for.

I walked slowly up the stairs towards reception. The hotel had all the trappings of pseudo-sophistication. There were a number of well-dressed women wandering aimlessly about waiting for their uniformed husbands. All were military wives and were done up to the nines although it was still early in the day. How different to the modern-day British and French who would rather wander about the tropics in a pair of shorts or a slip than suffer the agonies of tight-fitting corsets and garters. But that's the Portuguese, still half a century behind the rest when it comes to the little things of life.

A couple of well-groomed poodles lopped lazily past towards their regular pitch, in the shadow of some giant ferns which hung over the balcony. There, I subsequently observed, they spent most of the day gasping for breath in the heat which came wallowing in from the black tar below them. They were decorative, I suppose, and added a measure of status to the place in a nouveau riche sort of way.

Yes, he had been informed of my arrival, the owner told me after I had been left standing alongside the bar for 15 minutes. But since then other things had happened, he added with gauche effect. But he

would put me up in the storeroom. "Same rate," he affirmed without looking me in the eyes. I accepted. What else? The patron had recently bought the hotel, I learnt later. Like others of his ilk in Portugal's African Provinces, he was out to make his money and get out back to the Metropolis.

For my five dollars a day, all meals included, the fare was not bad. I shared a table, surrounded almost entirely by military personnel, with two West German correspondents, and drinks in the bar were cheap. Whisky was about 15 cents a large tot. The food was good considering the climate; most vegetables flown in from Europe three times a week. So were some of the finer fish dishes which made a change from the usual codfish baked in olive oil.

Prices in Bissau, I found, were on the whole cheaper than in Luanda or Lourenço Marques. General Spínola has deliberately kept taxes and import duties low in order to stimulate trade and keep the cost of living down for those who had little. He also hoped to make life in the territory more attractive financially than it is in highly-inflated Dakar or Conakry, the capitals of the two states opposing him in this war.

In this he has succeeded. If the full gambit of tourism were allowed, Bissau would probably become one of the hippie paradises of the world within a month, for it is comparatively easy to exist on less than 50 cents a day. That would include a roof over one's head and a moderate amount of wine with meals, even though living would be at the African level. There is no segregation among the races as it is known in southern Africa, or even the economic apartheid of Nairobi, Abidjan, or Kinshasa.

As it was, I was paying tourist rates for the best available. And although my bed was improvised for the first few days, part of the service included three huge fans which blew around the clock and helped keep the dark hours temperate and the mosquitoes away.

IV

AS LISBON SEES THE WAR

One of the most important characteristics of a guerrilla war is the notable difference that exists between the information the rebel forces possess and the information the enemies possess.

Che Guevara

The security blanket Portugal has so effectively drawn over its African wars these past ten years has often been referred to by visiting foreign journalists as the Whisky Curtain. It is not that Portugal produces its own brand of the brew, but rather because liquor is suspected by some of being extensively used as the "hidden persuader" to help foreigners see things the Portuguese way in the Overseas Provinces. They might just be right. Impeccably polished hosts the Portuguese certainly are. They customarily proffer whisky to their guests from the moment they arrive or get out of bed in the morning until they eventually stagger back into the sack 12 or 15 hours later; and that from some of the best-stocked bars in a few of the most unlikely places in Africa, whether it be army camp, town, or on a jungle patrol. No matter where one goes in these African wars, a bottle always appears when one least expects it, as if the officers in charge are blessed with some remarkable powers of alcoholic prestidigitation.

On one patrol in a remote part of Eastern Angola two years before, I had been out for some days with a group of soldiers in a particularly hot and arid region north of the Caprivi Strip. On our final evening in the bush the last drop of water in our canteens was already a memory when the officer in charge, a young infantry captain, quite nonchalantly produced a bottle of scotch from his kit bag. The leftovers we were to eat that night became a feast and the occasion distinctly memorable.

The Portuguese invariably seem to have one more card up their sleeves when things get tough, and it may be just this art of the unexpected which has kept them fighting in Africa longer than the French in Algeria and Indo-China, America in Korea and Vietnam, or the British in Cyprus or against the Mau Mau in Kenya.

They offered me scotch for breakfast on my first morning in Bissau. Though the sun was only an hour high in the sky, the airport weltered in the grip of a stifling, pungent heat, and within minutes I was battling against the monumental thirst which often precedes dehydration. It was not an altogether unexpected gesture on the part of my hosts as there were already others in the airport bar enjoying breakfast which consisted of large round Portuguese rolls stuffed with dollops of hard green cheese like they make it along the Rio Tejo, together with enough whisky to make anyone do handstands on the bonnet of the jeep on the way into town. Because I had a briefing ahead of me, I stuck to coffee, black and thick and bitter like the Turks and Moroccans enjoy it.

As it transpired there was to be no briefing that day. That only came on the fourth morning, after I had spent two days in the bush down south. It was all part of Lisbon's subtle familiarisation policy. They firmly believe that any war requires an adjustment, even when you are reporting on it; Guinea more so than most because of the complexities involved.

When the information session finally came, it was held in one of the offices of the local defence headquarters near the fort. The building was an impressive double-storied modern structure screened from the road by a large hedge. Judging by the comings and goings and the smart armed guard who clicked his polished black boots as we passed, this was the place where things happened. Certainly it had more of a military atmosphere than the rather amiable and dozey aura of the fort. The session was conducted through an interpreter by a general staff officer, Lt. Col. Lemos Pires. Most things concerning the war in Portuguese Guinea, I found out afterwards, were referred to this man, Spínola's general factotum.

The colonel did not speak English and this surprised me. In fact it was one of the idiosyncrasies of this particular African campaign that so few of the senior staff officers spoke anything but their local tongue and a bit of French or, occasionally, German, whereas one could get along pretty well in any of the major European languages in Angola and Moçambique. Or perhaps it was just that on this occasion Bissau's High Command did not want to communicate in an alien language and preferred to allow many of the nuances to be lost in translation. Other journalists who visited the war complained similarly.

Colonel Pires was an imposing man. Muscular, lithe, and greying

slightly at the temples, he had been personally chosen as an aide by General Spínola and reflected that confidence in his bearing. His mien was so typical of the upper-class Portuguese one rarely meets except in the higher echelons of state or industry. Young for his rank in the Portuguese army, he could not have been more than 40, if that. In dealing with me he was as astute and forthright in his answers as I was direct with my questions which were fired at him through an interpreter, an officer on his staff.

The meeting was held in a special room which had obviously been used for similar purposes before. There was a large, all-colour map of the country on the wall which appeared to have been used previously for operational purposes because of the many marks and lines which had been drawn across former battle zones, all of which had been erased but still shone faintly through the glaze. All lines led to Bissau. The map was also scored with the pin holes of ten years of campaigning.

General Spínola's representative explained the nature of his war in detail. Portuguese troops, he said, were engaged in a two-front battle in the territory, in the north and to the south, against an adversary which even they as military experts would be foolish to underrate. PAIGC training, their guerrilla methods, and their arms were first class, he said. "In fact there are times when I sincerely wish I had some of their young leaders with me in the field," he added smiling.

He believed it was to the advantage of Portugal that he and his fellow officers acknowledged the inherent strength of the guerrilla that opposed them. They knew his strengths and his weaknesses. In contrast, the PAIGC, he said, consistently deprecated anything Portuguese. Because of this the guerrilla leaders had often underrated Lisbon's military capability and had fared badly, in spite of the fact that the war had been on the go for most of a decade. Here they had been liberally assisted by a few well-known European writers who had entered the war zones with the guerrillas and come out with lengthy anti-Portuguese diatribes which presented a picture of a PAIGC army up against nothing but an illusionary threat which could easily be disposed of. "Paper tigers" was a word often bandied about by these observers--another Maoist phrase.

Writing of this kind made good reading, he said, but in the long term it hardly did the enemy any good apart from the propaganda value it initially enjoyed. What these men had written, he maintained, had

only succeeded in lulling everyone in the opposite camp into a false sense of security and achievement when in fact the opposite was really the case. "But that's their business," he added briskly.

Although PAIGC claimed about 20,000 men under arms, Pires estimated their numbers at between 6,000 and 7,000, of which about half were in the territory at any one time. The system of action operated by the enemy was a simple one. They had followed many examples set by the Vietcong in Southeast Asia. One of these was a splitting up of the army into sections. PAIGC's military forces were divided into three separate and identifiable "brigades," each about 2,000 men strong. Only one of these "brigades" was operational at any one time, while another rested in a friendly neighbouring territory, more often than not in the Guinea Republic, and the third remained on the move.

The operational brigade was split in turn into sections known locally as bi-groups, each about 38 men strong including a commander and a political commissar. These individual units operated independently of each other, though they sometimes combined in concerted counterattacks on strong Portuguese positions.

Colonel Pires stressed foreign involvement in the war. "Without the help of Touré's Guinea and Senghor's Senegal--and of course all the aid channelled in by the foreign powers--the PAIGC would never have been able to maintain the impetus as long as they have. In fact we doubt very much if they could last a month on their own. They are able to strike at us regularly from across the border and then withdraw as the pressure increases to the sanctity of neutral ground. But we have not yet reached the stage where we have had to hit at the source of the trouble, as the Americans and the Israelis have done."

The size of Portuguese Guinea, Colonel Pires stressed, was the most important factor in the war, both for themselves and for the enemy. While the guerrillas were able to enter the country after sunset, strike at positions within the borders with comparative ease, and then withdraw across the frontier again, Portuguese aircraft could easily hit at any point within 30 minutes of receiving a call. No place in the enclave, he said, was farther than 30 minutes' flying time from Bissau. The triangular-shaped country was only 150 miles across from the Atlantic and about 100 miles broad at its widest point.

"By the same token it is possible for the guerrillas to pass through from north to south in about three days, traveling mostly after it is

dark. But this is becoming an increasingly difficult task of late with our government forces taking a more aggressive line in their 'seek and destroy' operations." These had been upgraded, he said, since General Spínola had taken command.

The Portuguese staff officer gave details of PAIGC bases outside the country. There were about 30 in all, he said, which completely encircled the enclave. Of these, the most important were Ziguinchor, Morikounda, and Faquima in Senegal to the north, and Boke, Kadiafara, Kambara, and Koundara in the Republic of Guinea to the south and east. The latter-named town was also the site of a Russian-controlled relay radio station which is maintained in a camouflaged caravan near the local government school, about 25 miles from the eastern frontier of Portuguese Guinea. As a journalist, passing through, I had visited the site while traversing Touré's country early 1965.

The main guerrilla centre, Ziguinchor, has been a river port as long as history remembers. With a population of about 30,000 it was administered under the Portuguese flag until the 1860s; consequently many of the locals understand vernacular Portuguese if they do not speak it in addition to their colourful colloquial French and Creole. The headquarters of the PAIGC movement is at Conakry, about 200 miles south, as the crow flies, from Bissau. Its address is PO Box 298, Conakry. A second regional headquarters had been established at Dakar, Senghor's capital.

Abroad, the guerrilla organisation enjoys good will facilities in the capitals of Russia, Communist China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Algeria, North Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba. All these countries maintain diplomatic relations with Touré's Guinea where local legations include PAIGC within the scope of their brief. PAIGC is also represented in a number of African capitals, including Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Lusaka (Zambia), Cairo, and Brazzaville. More recently an office of the liberation movement has been opened in the Nigerian capital, Lagos. Algiers is considered a key post for the movement and is probably the most important liaison centre after Conakry. There it is represented by one of its most experienced and trusted aides, Joseph Turpin.

But it is the bases in the neighbouring states which interest the Portuguese. The large number is necessary, they maintain, because of the fact that there are no permanent PAIGC camps within the target country. Although claims to the contrary have often been made and are still being made today, the colonel said, it was an indisputable

fact that the guerrillas within the borders had to keep on the move if only to avoid being pounded to oblivion by Portuguese Air Force attacks which were regular, accurate, and highly concentrated when contact had been made. He backed up this argument by producing a copy of a field message which had been captured a week previously near Gadamael on the southern frontier close to where the Cuban army officer Peralta had been arrested. A photostat of the document had been prepared for me. It was typed in Portuguese and translated into English for my benefit. The gist of it reiterated a decree which had previously been made, to the effect that no PAIGC unit was to stay in any one area for more than two days. Without going into detail, bi-group leaders and commissars were reminded of the consequences of laxity in this respect, both from the PAIGC Command and from the possibility of Portuguese air attack once a unit's position had been pin-pointed.

"But although they remain mobile, it is the fact that they are in our territory that bothers us. Consequently we are affected from outside as well as inside. That's the nature of the struggle," the colonel said. The whole business was further complicated, he believed, by considerable natural obstacles which provided favourable conditions for the enemy. The terrain was difficult and was interspersed by a thousand rivers and streams. It was all ideally suited to Vietnam-type guerrilla operations.

PAIGC units, the Portuguese maintain, operate to a pre-scheduled pattern. They move into an area, strike at a predetermined target, and then move on again. The men in the various bi-groups stay perhaps six weeks within the country and are able to call for supplies when needed, usually by radio. These are brought across the border to pre-selected points, again at night, and distributed to one or more mobile bi-groups which had gathered there.

Although I said nothing at the time, the entire system operated by the PAIGC reflected a marked degree of organisation and control. There appeared to be a remarkable freedom of movement on the part of the guerrillas, especially at night. This was in contrast to the often difficult logistic problems faced by terrorists in Angola and more so in Moçambique. In Portuguese Guinea, the PAIGC appear to be able to move about with relative ease and are able to maintain fairly reliable supply links--in itself an achievement of no mean consequence.

On the face of it, it mattered little that they were not able to establish permanent bases or tabancas within the enclave, for they

could come and go just about as they pleased. But on the evidence of my and other journalists' visits, it does put into question the claim that large PAIGC communities and military camps have been established in the country, complete with clinics and schools, for something like 15,000 people according to one published declaration. They may have been able to achieve this much earlier on in the war--Como Island, an inshore strip of land which was held by the guerrillas in spite of repeated Portuguese attempts to dislodge them, is a typical example. But since then there is evidence that the Portuguese have pulled themselves up rather smartly by their bootstraps, mainly as a consequence of Spínola's influence. One of the first things he did was drive the guerrillas off Como.

Certainly one of the biggest problems facing Military Command in Bissau, I gathered, was patrolling the thousands of miles of waterways in the country. Many small streams were entirely obscured from the air by the heavy jungle. Others became a swamp at low tide, and one had to know one's way about to avoid being stranded in the mud between tides. Quicksand is commonplace in some areas near the coast.

Here again the guerrillas had the advantage of local African help who knew these backwaters as well as most people know their way to the office. Tribesmen who lived in the areas where problems were encountered had been moving through these swamps and streams for generations, and after a few years it did not take the PAIGC very long to get to know many of the obscure trails well.

The navy is used extensively for river patrols. Marines based at the coast and inland, often 50 miles from the sea, operate from commando-style camps in conjunction with the army and the air force. In deeper water, nearer the coast, larger, steel-hulled patrol boats are often seen from the air moving close inshore alongside the often impenetrable mangrove swamps. On my own trips with marine units along these stretches of heavy bush I found it impossible to see more than a few feet into the overgrown mass of mangrove swamps or jungle which often overhangs the river from the shore for twenty yards or more for miles on end at a stretch. The larger boats were rarely fired on, though small craft were used as random targets by the enemy when sniping from the jungle was not likely to draw an accurate reply. But what do you fire at when you hear shots coming at you from a 300-yard stretch of riverside jungle?

The guerrillas used mostly wooden dugout pirogues. It was these

fragile, elongated wooden craft carved from a single log which one sees throughout West Africa and in the Okavango Swamp that the marines searched for in their high-speed rubber boats. But the vastness of the river network made an efficient cover system impossible for the Portuguese. Further surveillance from the air was necessary, especially along the coast.

And because of this vastness, PAIGC convoys did get through regularly. Until now the tactic has been to wait in the dense undergrowth until a Portuguese patrol has passed and then to slip across to the other bank as fast as the broad-backed paddlers will take them. Occasionally the marines make contact in midstream. The guerrillas on these occasions rarely retaliate, for not many of them can swim. But by this time their weapon cargo has been ditched over the side, and it would take an army of experienced frogmen to find a single Kalashnikov or grenade in the turbid, swirling waters.

An additional problem facing the Portuguese is the fact that many of the local tribesmen are traditionally fishermen who, before the war, used to earn a livelihood from their craft. "We can hardly stop them now. There are not many of them and those working in certain areas are controlled and licensed. In any event they would hardly be fishing in the thick of the war in such areas as the southern reaches, near the Guinea-Conakry border, or around Mansoa or Farim farther north where the fighting is intense." It is here that Portugal is in the final stage of a road-building project which has drawn every active guerrilla within a 20-mile radius of the construction works.

Population statistics in Portuguese Guinea are a little less vague than elsewhere in black Africa, though there is conflict between the figures published in Lisbon and those claimed by the PAIGC. The guerrillas, according to Colonel Pires,¹ maintain that there are some 800,000 people under Portuguese control. In fact, the officer reckoned, there were barely 500,000, which tallied, roughly speaking, with the 1960 census¹ of 530,380. There had been a decrease because of the number of civilians who had fled to neighbouring territories to escape the ravages of war--between 90,000 to 100,000 altogether.

Of the half-million souls in the country at the present time--including 7,000 whites and mulatto civilians²--Pires calculated that all but 50,000 (or 90% of the total) fell under direct Portuguese control. The

¹ Before the war.

² There were 3,000 white settlers in the country in 1963.

balance, all black, had committed themselves to the PAIGC and were mostly holed up in some of the wilder, inaccessible jungle and swamp regions of the country. These were the tabancas the guerrillas relied on while in the country and were the subject of so many proud PAIGC claims.

Of the refugees out of the country, the majority--estimated by Bissau and the Senegalese authorities at 70,000--had chosen refuge north of the border in Senegal. Another 20,000 had gone to the Republic of Guinea in the south, mainly out of tribal considerations. Political conditions in Touré's country over the past few years had not exactly been conducive to encouraging immigration from any source. It was a fact that many of those who fled south had subsequently either returned to their Portuguese homelands or had traveled the long road north, around the bulge of the enclave, to the comparative freedom of Senegal together with other Guinean nationals who wanted out of Touré's oppression. There were also a number of refugees from Portuguese Guinea in Gambia.

As in the other Portuguese Provinces in Africa, insurrection from the start had been largely ethnic, centered on one or two of the more prominent tribes which had rejected Portuguese control. In Moçambique it was the Macondes; in Angola the Bakongo. In Portuguese Guinea it was the populous Balanta and to a lesser extent the Nalu, who had rebelled in the first place. Altogether, Pires said, there were about 20 major ethnological groupings in the country. There were 200,000 Balanta. These were followed, in order of numerical prominence, by the Fula (120,000); Manjaco (between 60,000 and 70,000); Mandingo (60,000); Papel (40,000); and the Beafada who totalled approximately 30,000. Other tribes such as the Brame, Felupe, Manoanca, Baiote, and Nalu hardly exceeded 10,000 each.

Although each of the tribes had their distinctive customs and traditions which were jealously guarded and preserved for posterity, there was a definite split between the Africans along the coastal, lowland regions and those from the more arid interior, among whom the Fula and Mandingo predominated. Both these tribes were influenced by strong Islamic religious sentiments. The country's Muslim community, which accounted for about 40 percent of the population, was drawn mainly from these two ethnic groupings. The balance, except about 5 percent of the total who practice Christianity, are animists, the colonel said, quoting liberally from statistics which had recently been compiled by his Department of Psychological Warfare.

I tackled the colonel on the Christian factor, but he was not prepared to comment on the inordinately low percentage. That was the way it was, he said. Few officials with whom I came into contact later were prepared to give a reason for this anomaly, considering that Portugal had weighed influence along the coast for five centuries and that after all that time there were barely 25,000 Christians out of a total population of half a million. It was interesting, too, while in the country--and I traveled fairly extensively by land and air to all the major centres--that I saw few Catholic missionaries about. This was in contrast to the dozens of mission stations, schools, and clinics one finds in Angola and Moçambique strung out from the big cities to a few of the remotest corners of Africa.

Portuguese Guinea had probably always been regarded as something of a lost cause to the rank and file of the Metropolitan population and nothing illustrates this better than the lack of any concrete economic or social achievement in the country, at least nothing on the scale one finds today in and around Lourenço Marques and Beira in Moçambique, or for that matter Luanda and Lobito in Angola. The colonel could not refute the argument or offer an explanation. Things were different now, he said, and Portugal, like Britain and France, should not be judged on its past.

Then followed questions about black people fighting alongside Portugal in this war. How many Africans were there in the Portuguese Army in Guinea? I queried. The colonel had obviously been asked that question many times before, for he rattled the figures off from memory.

"Altogether there are about 4,000 black soldiers in the army. Every one of them is a volunteer." This, he said, was different from Angola where some indigenes are still conscripted. In addition to these black troops who were included in the 30,000-man regular army stationed in the territory, there were another 4,000 blacks in the Civil Militia. These were not men on active service, he explained, but they played a para-military role in their home areas. Like the troops, they were armed but only those who requested weapons were given them. On top of this figure, 6,000 men had been given arms for the purpose of "self-defence," as he phrased it. These weapons were mainly used by trained black personnel for the defence of armed villages, or "strategic hamlets" as they were known in Vietnam. This was another system of control of the population which had been borrowed from Malaya. "Altogether, therefore, there are between 14,000 and 15,000 black people with guns in the country and the total is increasing as more villagers make a definite stand on the outcome of the war," the colonel said.



Black civilian volunteers for the Portuguese cause in the east.

Would the size of the army be increased? I asked. The colonel thought not, for two reasons. In the first place, he said, a fair proportion of the population had to be kept outside the sphere of military operations to work the land. In spite of what the PAIGC had claimed in the past, agriculture still formed the backbone of the economy and the people had to eat. The second and certainly more feasible reason for keeping the number of men under arms at its present level was, as he said, to avoid a further escalation on the part of the PAIGC. "If we increase the size of the military establishment so will the enemy in order to cope with losses. So we leave things as they are for our steel lies in being able to hold out longer than PAIGC has estimated we will." He added confidently, "And that is something I'm quite certain we will be able to do."

Colonel Pires had made a clear statement of fact which bordered on a tactical deduction. What he had told me that quiet afternoon in his conference room was later borne out by a number of senior staff officers I was to meet in Bissau and Lisbon. It was an advance on the vague generalities journalists normally have to cope with when covering Portugal's African wars.

Obviously the colonel was optimistic about the chances not only of Portugal's survival in this war, but also of the possibility of winning the struggle ultimately. He would not tie himself down to dates. In fact, he was nothing if not vague about the termination of the military side of things. But he did stress the timeless patience of the Portuguese, a nation which took adversity in its stride and was prepared to wait out the catastrophes of nature and war. This, he felt, was a factor which was not yet clearly understood by the rebels. He believed them an impatient and oft-times impetuous crowd of individuals, not lacking in courage, but with little foresight or historical perspective. The colonel explained his reasons for making this bland remark.

"Cabral promised a lot during the course of the past decade. Few of the fruits of the promised land have, however, been tasted, even by the hierarchy of the movement that started this war in 1963. And in an impatient Africa, if the leader cannot deliver the goods there is always another man somewhere nearby who often believes that he is more than capable of that supreme task and that it should be entrusted to him. Eventually this other man sets out and does something about it. That time is not too far distant for Cabral," Colonel Pires commented with a casual smile. He was accustomed to philosophising, and after a tedious hour of facts and figures he came into his own when talking about the more abstruse aspects of the war.

The colonel continued his monologue which I recorded on tape, for his statements by and large represented official government thinking in this war, even though Portugal's critics may regard his argument as factious and perhaps be inclined to punch holes in much of what he said.

"The war started badly for us in '63, with many of the Africans on the side of the PAIGC. But though the odds were against our continued presence, there were still some Africans, notably the Fulas, who believed in retaining our presence and leadership in a disintegrating Africa. Many people here were frightened of what was happening in neighbouring Guinea-Conakry.

"These Africans suffered badly in the beginning. Because Cabral's men were strong they did not hesitate to intimidate those people who had wavered in throwing in their lot with the cause. The Manjacos, traditional prevaricators, one and all, also sat on the fence and were badly treated at first. But they are still sitting on the fence and refuse to immerse themselves in the war effort because they are a peaceful people and they're cautious. They're waiting to see the outcome. When they are quite certain, they will make their stand. It is not for them to be rushed by anyone."

Colonel Lemos Pires got up from his desk and paced about the room. "Cabral offered the people a long list of prerogatives. He would improve their level of living for a start, he said. There would be unqualified access to public posts by black people; his party would provide more schools, more and better roads, and more clinics. More of everything, in fact, that made his portfolio sound impressive to the ordinary folk of the country. It mattered little where the money would come from to effect all these changes. There is little doubt that he was sincere at the time, but then Cabral is also an ambitious man.

"Once the war had started we entered the first real test we had encountered in all the years we had been on the coast. There had been minor flare-ups from time to time in the past, but certainly nothing on as grand a scale as this. Subversion was on the loose and we had to stop it. How? In comparison to Cabral's impressive list of promises we had nothing positive to show to counter his argument that we had never done anything for the black man, or at any rate, very little. In this he was not altogether wrong. This I admit readily. It is a hard fact of life that at the time of the first attacks the people living under Cabral's banner of hope and freedom were by and large in

better circumstances than those living under the Portuguese. It took some of the men in charge here a long time to realise it. They did, in the end.

"Now," he paused a while, "things are different." Pires paced about restlessly, looked at the map, and then turned to face me again. "The enemy is still strong and it keeps those same promises it made eight or nine years ago. But people are slowly becoming aware that the PAIGC has not been able to live up to the covenants Cabral made out there in the bush and in Conakry long ago. Nor has it been able to implement even the most rudimentary elements of that ambitious plan.

"And since General Spínola entered the picture, he brought with him from Lisbon a revolution of his own which no one ever dreamt possible in this forlorn fragment of Africa. Since then the prospects of a PAIGC government have become more remote than ever. The tide has turned, as it were. The general has been here three years and already he has matched Cabral's original plan point for point and is now moving into the final stage of consolidation, not to win the war but to contain it, for we know that while we have hostile neighbours there can be no real peace. You have similar examples in other countries, of which Israel is only one.

"General Spínola is a realist: a ruthless realist at times, but all the same aware of what is going on around him. So, I suppose, was General Schulz, but in a different sense. Schulz came here in 1965 and predicated that the war would be over in six months. He left three years later a disillusioned man. Unlike Schulz, Spínola did not come here in May, 1968, claiming that it would be all over within a set period of time. He arrived with a socio-economic plan in his briefcase which he had devised himself. Much of what you see about you on your travels in the enclave is part of that plan already put into operation. Look carefully, evaluate, and judge for yourself, for history is being made at this moment. We have implemented the largest re-housing scheme ever undertaken in any of the Overseas Provinces. We have implemented the biggest road-building and tarring project seen in West Africa for two or three decades, and it's nearly all complete. Then there is the social side which has been so successful that we are winning back more than 3,000 refugees a year, people who had previously abandoned all hope for the Portuguese presence here. In addition we have 30 percent of the children of schoolgoing age attending classes. In two years that percentage will have doubled. Compare that statistic for yourself with the current United Nations figures for

our two hostile neighbours, Senegal and the Republic of Guinea.

"For those who want to go to the enemy, General Spínola says simply, 'Go. I will not hold you against your will. If you prefer the jungle, go to it.' There have not been many who have taken advantage of the offer," the colonel said.

He stopped for a while and sat down again. Slowly he raised his head. "You know, it's funny." He waited until the translator had finished. "When General Spínola arrived here, no one really believed him when he laid his cards on the table. Most of the old guard were agog when he told them what he proposed to do. He was branded with all kinds of unflattering sobriquets.

"Now these self-same critics--there are whites as well as blacks among them--regard him as some kind of prophet reborn. You will see later what I mean, while you are still in the country."

The colonel detailed the current phase of the campaign. After years of fighting in the bush and jungle three conditions existed in the country, the officer said. There were areas under Portuguese control, areas under enemy control (mainly the thinly-populated southeast pocket), and substantially more regions in which both adversaries were represented. It was here that most of the fighting took place and, statistically, he reckoned, this latter region was composed of between 40 and 50 percent of the country. He personally opted for the lower figure, though whatever it was, it did not really matter, for the Portuguese military presence was necessary throughout the province while the war went on. Naturally things were easier in regions that had returned to Portuguese control than in the actual war zones.

For the purpose of countering the threat, he said, his government had recognised four main essentials in this war. The first of these was the evolution of a well-coordinated intelligence network. For this purpose General Spínola had acknowledged the need for an efficient security force which worked at all levels both inside and beyond the borders of the country.

He also recognised that apart from the military struggle, this was a "hearts and minds" campaign programmed to win the support of the civilian people and that it should be carried out with enthusiasm. As Malaya had proved, the colonel said, success breeds success. A unit which was able to counter the enemy successfully had more

influence for the good on the local people than one which had failed a number of times. The same principle worked for and against the PAIGC.

The third priority was a well-integrated command system, and here Spínola had been careful to choose those men he knew and had worked with before, in other Portuguese theatres of war in Africa. He was a staunch disciplinarian and left no doubt in anyone's mind that he, and only he, was in command. He often backed up his orders by personal action, as I was to see myself later in some of his early-morning helicopter swoops.

Finally came the question of the duration of the war, Colonel Pires asserted. There was a need to appreciate that this type of warfare was a slow business. Time did not matter. It took eleven years before Malaya could officially be declared free from the menace of Chinese communist terrorism. The French had fought almost a decade in Algeria. The Americans had been fighting in Indo-China for more than ten years, but then they had handled things a little differently to the Portuguese, he added with a sagacious half-smile on his face which underscored his remark far better than any further explanation.

The colonel also admitted readily that his government was applying many of the principles learnt in bush-fire wars in other parts of the world. "To be a guerrilla today, it is fashionable to read the works of Mao and Guevara on insurgency warfare. We, too, have read them in order to know what the enemy is thinking and to deduce what he may or may not do next. But it is historically inaccurate and psychologically dangerous to think that these people invented the strategy and tactics, for guerrilla warfare was not the brainchild of the communists. Far from it. Nothing which they propagate at present was not known or put into operation in some earlier war.

"We are up against a threat, a serious threat, but we know the scope and intent of that same threat and, therefore, are not unprepared, for we are drawing on the knowledge and experience of many people and cultures. The PAIGC, we know, has much strength and aid from outside. But we are not without friends. Time, however, is on the side of our government, because, as the different projects reach fruition, they steadily gain us more converts and erode PAIGC influence."

The PAIGC was most aware of all this, the colonel said, and for this

reason had recently tried a different tactic. Tacitly acknowledging that the guerrilla struggle was getting them nowhere, PAIGC had taken to launching concerted strikes across the borders from Guinea and Senegal. These "minor invasions," for they involved hundreds of troops, bordered on conventional warfare. There had been half a dozen attacks of this nature in the past year and for the first time the enemy had shown himself in numbers. "This is exactly what our men have been waiting for and is one of the reasons why enemy casualties of late have been so high," the colonel said. Certainly, it added another dimension to the war.

More recently, the officer said, there had been evidence that the PAIGC had become restive and more ruthless in their actions among the native populace. They had killed villagers who had refused to fight for them. They were also more indiscriminate in their attacks, often razing tabancas as well as military establishments and consequently killing civilians, which was something they had pointedly avoided before. "The population here is becoming afraid of the guerrillas. This is good for us because more of the enemy are defecting to our lines.

"But even so," he said, standing up and indicating that the interview was at an end, "many of the local Africans just cannot come out wholeheartedly for us. Those in the remoter areas are more aware than we are of the tenuous hold any government has over a people, whether it be us or the terrorists. History has taught them empirically that kingdoms come and go like the seasons, even here in tropical Africa. And Africa is more susceptible to change than most continents. Even our tea-boy outside that door knows that much."

THE SOUTHERN FRONT

Two weapons today threaten freedom in our world. One-- the 100-megaton Hydrogen bomb--requires vast resources of technology, effort and money. It is the ultimate weapon of civilized and scientific man. The other--a nail and a piece of wood buried in the sand or in the shallow water of a river crossing--is deceptively simple, the weapon of a peasant.

Lt. Col. T.N. Greene, U.S. Marine
Corps; Editor of "The Guerrilla and
How to Fight Him."

Portugal has two secret weapons in its varied and multi-national arsenal. It has others, of course, but these are the ones used most often in its winner-take-all war against the black guerrillas.

The first is the beer bottle. "Empty beer bottles so that they make lots and lots of noise at night," explained one of the young officers in the south when he first outlined the system to me. The other weapon is a simple wooden staff, about four feet long with a pica, a strip of metal or wire, attached to one end. This is used for detecting mines. Elementary as they are, both have saved Portugal millions in this ultra-sophisticated war which for sheer intensity and fury has no par in Africa south of the Sahara.

The bottles I saw were used in a variety of camps in Guinea. They were strung out in rows along the perimeter of each civil and military complex or aldeamentos¹ under government control. They hang loose, alongside the wire, like odd-coloured tinsel on an elongated Christmas tree. When someone tries to creep up in the night and cut the wires, the bottles sound their clinking warning on the edge of the jungle and the troops come running with their guns after the general alarm has been called.

"It works like a charm," said one young officer who had grown up

¹ Fortified hamlet



A search for land mines is always a nerve-wracking affair--the guerrillas often choose this as a moment for attack.

in Lourenço Marques and had been educated at one of the "better" schools in Johannesburg. "The principle is as old as warfare itself. The Romans used geese, the Americans in Vietnam and Korea used dogs. We use something that would have been thrown into the jungle as waste, and this, our early warning system, costs no one anything, except the pleasure of getting slightly high on occasion. But the boys enjoy that," he grinned.

The officer explained that early on in the war they had tried guard dogs but these had been unsuccessful. Neither they nor their handlers had much peace because of the constant jungle noises which echoed through the camp after dark. "You never knew whether it was the enemy creeping up to the fence or some wild animal which had come close to the camp out of curiosity." Also a dog requires a fair amount of water which has to be carried by the handler when traveling on foot over long distances. On long treks a dog needs more water than one man can comfortably carry.

Electric and electronic devices were also tried, but because most of the aldeamentos were also inhabited by civilian families, there was always the danger of children touching something they should not and triggering the alarms or electrocuting themselves. "We could take no chances, so finally we settled on beer bottles," the officer added. "We used cans before, but there weren't enough of them, and anyway they rusted through in a year in this climate. Now we've found the perfect answer. They use bottles in Vietnam and Cambodia as well, you know."

The other "secret" weapon is just as simple. The short, wooden staff is used to prod the soil ahead of a patrol or in the road soon to be used by a convoy. Depending on the width of the path, one or two men step ahead, carefully feeling the dirt for soft, concealed shoulders which would indicate that someone had been digging there recently and had then meticulously covered his tracks before moving on.

The man with the pica feels the ground carefully. The entire patrol, silent and pensive, can hear the shaft as it cuts through the ground, metal scraping lightly against sand and occasionally small stones. Suddenly there is a loud "clonk"--a hollow, unmistakable sound. The patrol stops dead in its tracks, each man warily peering into the nearby jungle for the slightest sign of movement which could betray the presence of the enemy. Nothing. The man with the pica continues feeling, prodding the area around where he first made

contact, acutely aware that the enemy often lay more than one mine at a time in the hope that the Portuguese will accidentally step on the second while removing the first. It has happened before.

Because most of the mines used in this war are made of plastic or wood, conventional electronic mine detectors, such as those used in the last war, are useless since the mines placed by the PAIGC have no metal fittings at all.

I saw my first row of bottle defences and pica the afternoon I arrived in a camp near the southern border of the enclave. The schedule of my visit to Portuguese Guinea had been drawn up before I arrived in the territory from Lisbon. Details were left to an army major who had recently been appointed to the staff of General Spínola, specifically for the purpose of acting as "guide" to various members of the international press corps who visited the province. Major Rui Alcada was an old soldier. But because he had never seen action in his long career in the army, having served most of his time in Europe and in the former Goa colony on the Indian subcontinent and had only recently been transferred to Guinea, he was also a bold, if somewhat hamfisted, soldier. His specialty was "psychological warfare," as he termed it. He was attached to Lt. Col. Lemos Pires, the man who had been responsible for my briefing. Alcada had been trained in his craft by the West Germans and the Americans. Having been associated with the man for some days, it is my opinion he would have done better in security.

Alcada had his own ideas of what the press should and should not do and see. It mattered little to him that an accredited war correspondent had been cleared by the Lisbon authorities to visit the Guinea war zones. If Alcada decided, in his wisdom, that a journalist should not speak to certain individuals with whom he had come into normal contact on the tour, or see something which formed a part of the Portuguese war effort, then his decision carried the day. As far as he was concerned, the press was an unnecessary evil and it was his misfortune to be mixed up with them. He was the final arbiter in all things in Guinea as far as my tour was concerned and he made that clear from the start. Our association was intermittently stormy. Happily it did not last long.

Alcada explained immediately on arrival that I would depart that same afternoon on a two-day visit to the southern zone on the border with the Republic of Guinea. We would visit a dozen camps or more, traveling by air between each of the military camps and aldeamentos and staying

over one night in a town which I knew was well clear of the war zone. As a fop he stressed that spotter aircraft and helicopters would be laid on for my visit and that I would be well catered for wherever we went. Naturally, he would accompany me. He would show me, he said, that there was no war in Guinea.

By any measure this was a bad start. Either Alcada was a fool or he thought I was, for as I pointed out, what else were 30,000 Portuguese troops in the country--all of them armed to the teeth and suffering daily casualties--doing there if they were not fighting a war? I was also unhappy about the itinerary. Having visited Angola and Moçambique I was familiar with the systems in operation in these regions. A dozen whistle stops in two days hardly fitted the bill. I had traveled more than 2,000 miles from Europe to report on a war. I was not on a tourist excursion even though the trip was at his government's expense. The invitation was theirs, not mine, I told him.

Major Alcada was visibly distressed. He clearly had little experience in dealing with the press, although he said he had a number of books on public relations. He regarded my protests initially as reactionary and later as a personal insult and protested volubly as Portuguese are wont to do when under stress. Finally he backed down when I suggested that either my itinerary be changed or he could put me on the first plane out of the country for my time would be better served elsewhere. I explained that I had not only come to see the war, but I wanted to get the feel of it as well; I needed to come to grips with this guerrilla campaign in my own time in order to make an honest appraisal. This he did not understand.

Only later in my tour did I discover that Alcada's tactic was standard procedure as far as his personal relations with newspapermen were concerned. He had tried a similar gambit with Peter Lehmann of the mass-circulation West German weekly magazine Stern and come off badly. Lehmann had endured his meddling for about 48 hours before he demanded that Alcada be replaced by someone a little more amenable. Because I arrived shortly after this incident, it was my luck that he should have been appointed my guide. It took me a little longer than Lehmann to make the same request.

Alcada finally agreed to a shorter first trip with lengthier stopovers in a few camps of my choice. In the first phase of my visit I wanted to see the nature of the action taking place, and Lehmann had indicated that things were difficult along the Guilege Corridor to the south and

also at Buba and Fulacunda farther towards the interior. Alcada agreed that I should first visit Gadamael which stood astride the corridor. This would be followed by a trip to the old port of Cacine, one of the first places which Cabral's men had captured in the early days of the war and, thereafter, to Cameconde farther south, about a mile from the frontier. All three camps are in the notorious Quitafine region which is the main infiltration route to the north. After that we could come back to Tite, Buba, and other centres in the central jungle zone where there had been considerable guerrilla activity recently.

The distance between Bissau and Gadamael is barely 90 miles. We left Bissau in a Dornier spotter aircraft after lunch and headed south. The vista which greeted us once we had gained altitude and crossed the broad Geba River estuary was astonishing, the more so because few visitors to Africa ever see this corner of the continent with its pristine, often inspiring grandeur. The Portuguese had not encouraged tourism to their Guinea before the war and few visitors had arrived since the conflagration had started.

At about 10,000 feet Portuguese Guinea stretched out in front of us, a wide sweep of swampy lowlands divided by broken, ragged streams and marshes etched deeply into the terrain in spite of an overhanging layer of foggy humidity. Water was everywhere. It seemed incredible that anyone should want to settle in this kind of country, much less fight for it. A road petered out somewhere in the hazy distance beyond, crossing country which most resembled the Mekong or Irrawaddy deltas. It had been built long ago, but for the life of me I could not see why, for there was little arable ground between the swamps and the dark, dank patches of jungle which broke the monotony every few miles or so. Here and there a rice paddy blinked through between the jagged lines of water and swamp. Compared to the northern sector of the country, this zone was backward, primeval even, partly because of the war, I guessed, and partly because of the natural physical limitations of the region. This was certainly Africa at its worst. Only 100 miles northwards in Gambia, the same type of country had led early Portuguese, French, and British navigators to call this stretch of coast the White Man's Grave. Less than a century ago the white intruders were still dying at a frightening rate from fever and other tropical diseases.

We were a few miles off Buba, still heading south, when we met a squadron of Harvard fighters returning from a pre-lunch raid. There were four pairs of aircraft, traveling in echelon, independent of each

other. Some of the flyers waved as they passed.

Our pilot, a young man of about 21, explained, "We always travel in pairs. It's safer. It's also a good psychological factor. If the one aircraft is damaged by enemy fire or has mechanical problems and has to land in the jungle, the other can cover it until the 'copters arrive." He had to shout above the roar of the engine. The Dorniers had proved their worth in all of Portugal's African wars, but they do not come equipped with such frills as soundproofing. It is even worse while aloft when one opens a hatch to take pictures, but on this occasion I was prevented from doing so by Alcada. "No photographs," he ordered sternly. Something to do with security regulations, he said.

We reached Gadamael minutes later. From the air the fortification was not unlike many of the other camps I had visited in Angola and Moçambique. It lay a short distance from the undefined southern border, which had been drawn arbitrarily by the colonial powers of another epoch. About a quarter-mile across, Gadamael straddled a piece of dry ground but was surrounded on three sides out of four by water. One side was the river. On the two other extremities of the camp, swamp and jungle crept in close to the rows of buildings which lined its perimeter. Only the last side offered open ground that had been cleared. Here traces of a tortuous road snaked away into the bush and in the rough direction of a camp in the jungle beyond.

There were two distinctive features about the camp which immediately attracted my attention. We were circling the camp waiting for troops to take up position on the edge of the runway before we could land--a necessary precaution so we would not be fired on by the enemy as we touched down--when I spotted a long irregular row of trenches which reached around the camp on all sides, like the misshapen jaws of a giant hacksaw, culminating at each corner in a heavy concrete block-house. I also noted the defence system, which centered around the middle of the camp. Round, raised bunkers of sand stood at about shoulder height; shiny brown barrels--140 mm long-range guns--plus a couple of Howitzers from Hitler's war glinted in the sun from their emplacements as we passed.

The guns, I was later informed, were used fairly often and were something new in Portugal's war with the black man. Nothing of this nature had been used in either Angola or Moçambique to date. The Rhodesians and South Africans in their few minor skirmishes down south had not even considered big guns in their phase of anti-insurgency

warfare. Clearly the scope of jungle warfare in Guinea, incorporating occasional artillery barrages, had escalated vastly from the purely guerrilla struggle of the earlier period. Alcada tried to shrug the guns off as something used to frighten the enemy when they ventured too close to the frontier.

We circled Gadamael for some minutes, moving slowly between the river and marsh over some fairly thick country which looked almost impenetrable from the air. Was the pilot not concerned about being sniped at from the ground as he swept slowly over the groves of green mangroves? Yes, he answered emphatically, but it was a chance he had to take. Later he told me that Portuguese Air Force aircraft were rarely shot at by the PAIGC. The guerrillas were fearful of being rocketed or bombed, and consequently avoided firing on planes from the ground unless they were directly attacked by fighters or had been ordered to hold a defensive position. Another pilot who flew me out in a helicopter evacuation air-lift later admitted that he had been fired on once, but it was a short burst over a great distance, even though he was sitting pretty in the middle of a rice paddy. The shots had come from the jungle lining the open ground. A nearby army patrol had replied.

Meanwhile our Dornier was approaching the strip fast. Sitting in the back behind the pilot, Alcada and I held on to some well-worn leather straps for support. There were no seats for passengers and consequently no safety belts. We sat on the mail which was being delivered to the camp. The whole thing is a little hairy the first few times, but one gets used to it.

We touched down in a shower of dry red dust and taxied to a stop between two armoured cars manned by a number of soldiers. They were an untidy, unshaven lot, clad in an assortment of shorts, shirts, and vests. One man wore a faded pair of bathing trunks. The young officer who greeted us apologised for the turnout and muttered something about the climate. It was hot and we had arrived in the siesta hour which usually includes lunch and the following four hours of the day. The men were equipped with just about every weapon in the Portuguese armoury, from regular G-3s and captured Simonov carbines to a hastily erected mortar at the far end of the strip. The local commander was taking few chances.

Captain Almeida, the officer commanding, was waiting for us when we disembarked with the mail. He introduced himself and the other officers present and explained that his second-in-command was out

on patrol in the jungle. His number three who spoke a modicum of English would be our host for the afternoon. Almeida spoke only Portuguese.

Coffee was waiting for us in the mess (or would we prefer whisky?), so we ambled over, slowly, past endless rows of barbed wire defences and square concrete pill-boxes with menacing slits cut across their black walls. All were manned. From some of the slits we could detect the dull glint of metal in the afternoon sun. From another wafted the easy strains of a French melody broadcast from some distant radio station along the coast, probably Dakar, capital of a country at war with Portugal. The struggle was full of surprises.

Major Alcada stuck to my side like toffee to a blanket. If I clamoured over a machine gun turret, he was right there alongside me giving it his meticulous once-over. If I talked to one of the officers, as I did in the mess, he would quickly cross to my side of the room and join in, usually with a question in Portuguese as to what I had been asking. The man was thorough. I'll give him his dues. But this was not what I had come to Portuguese Guinea for.

Matters only came to a head later that afternoon. I had been conducted over the defences on the far side of the camp by another of the young officers who spoke a reasonable French which I could understand. Alcada had met an old crony from his days in Goa. Had the camp been attacked recently? I asked the young officer, while Alcada was otherwise occupied. Yes, it had, he replied. They were regularly pounded from across the border and also occasionally by artillery from across the swamps which lay to the north of Gadamael. The camp always used its big guns to retaliate.

It was the final part of his reply which interested me, for it indicated that the guerrillas had brought big guns into Portuguese Guinea and were using them against government defensive positions with reasonable success. Were they accurate, the PAIGC? I queried. The officer said that they were, up to a point. "They will lob about a dozen shells at us, from a distance of about four or five miles, and perhaps one will hit the camp." It was that single shell which did the damage. They had lost three men this way in the past three months, apart from other casualties. There had also been civilian losses in the adjacent African aldeamentos. At this juncture Major Alcada rushed across to us. In a single sentence in Portuguese he broke up the party and took the man aside, while I was led off to see some mortar positions.

Correspondents often experience interference at sometime or another

in their jobs and there is not much they can do about it. But what irks most is that obscurantism which one encounters from those who regard the security of the nation as a personal affair. A sprinkling of Portuguese officers in the African war zones seem to suffer from this affliction, if it could be called that. Thankfully there are not many that one comes into daily contact with, but enough to make things difficult at what often turns out to be a crucial moment. Alcada's interference while I was talking to the young officer about artillery bombardments of the camp is a case in point. Desperate to prove to me that this war, which had already claimed about 1,200 deaths in action, was a non-starter, he had equivocated on a number of questions in the few hours I had known him.

I had said nothing when the officer was led away by Alcada. But when the same man came back moments later and told me that everything he had said about the artillery attacks was not true, I reacted sharply. Someone was lying.

The altercation was over in a minute and there were a few harsh words said which were repeated later in Bissau and which finally resulted in Alcada being relieved of his charge. What I told him was basically this: It was all well and good for him to be selective about what I saw, even though this was unusual for the type of Portuguese officer I had met to date, but there was no need to be devious. His efforts in trying to prove that there was no war, I pointed out, were worse than the unbridled propaganda of the PAIGC who regularly claimed massive victories and that the entire country was in their pocket. One expected that kind of statement from a semi-literate guerrilla, recently returned from the jungle, but not from a man who professed a cultured background and an officer to boot.

Alcada, fortunately, was the exception rather than the rule as far as cooperation was concerned in this and other Portuguese wars I have covered. His actions typified the hide-bound intransigent civil servant type one finds in some European and black and white African capitals--all smiles and blank charm overlaying an almost morbid suspicion of foreigners which bordered on xenophobia. In Portuguese Guinea and Angola I found far more cooperation and hard-talking among the officers in the field--those doing the actual fighting--than among those back at headquarters. The singular exceptions were General Spínola, his aide, Lt. Col. Lemos Pires, and the man who replaced Alcada, Captain Saraiva "Otello" de Carvalho, officers and gentlemen who would rather not talk to a hostile, visiting journalist than have to lie to him. About that I am certain, for even with them there were some pretty frank things said from time to time.

With the clash of personalities over, we were able to get down to more serious business. It was remarkable how the officers, now removed from the political ambit of Alcada, came into their own once the air had been cleared.

Yes, they told me after he had gone off with the O. C., actions were fairly regular, but not as intense as one would have expected in these parts. The PAIGC in the region were mostly "birds of passage" and more intent on passing through to the central and northern zones of the war than looking for skirmishes on the frontier. The officers figured they had a fatality ratio of about three terrorists for every one of their own men killed and that this figure could, roughly speaking, be applied to the entire country. It is interesting that the ratio in Angola and Moçambique was approximately five or six to one. Another statistic they passed on was the rate of wounded as compared with fatalities. It had been estimated by one of them (and this was later borne out by statistics collated in Bissau) that for every Portuguese soldier killed, another five were wounded. Of these about one in fifteen could be regarded as a permanent injury with serious loss of limb or faculty. Another one in ten suffered semi-permanent disability. The balance recovered fully, though a fair proportion had seen their last action in Africa.

The figures were interesting in the light of total war casualties since the impasse had begun. Although Portuguese High Command had always been guarded about its war casualties, the following figures were given to me by one of the military attaches of a nation regularly invited to tour Portugal's African war zones each year. His figures indicated that in the eight years of war up to the end of 1970, Portugal had lost about 1,200 men in action in Portuguese Guinea. Another 2,000-odd had died in accidents or of tropical illness or other causes in that country. The comparable figures for Angola were in the region of 2,000 killed in action in the past decade and, for Moçambique, about 950 action deaths in seven years of hostilities.

Looking at the figures analytically, my attache friend had worked out that of all the men Portugal lost in its three African wars, only 38 percent had died in action. The total number of dead in all these theatres, therefore, he said--including those who died of other causes--must, by 1971, be fairly close to the 12,000 mark since the early sixties. And if one extends these projections to include wounded during the entire period, the number of Portuguese casualties during the decade must be something like 50,000 in Angola, Guinea, and Moçambique.

There are no published figures for guerrilla dead in any of the three overseas Provinces, though these must be considerable. Estimates range from a conservative figure put out by the PAIGC of about 2,000 dead during the nine years of fighting to a Portuguese tally totalling something in the vicinity of 10,000, though this total could hardly be accurate as body counts after jungle frays are rare. If one is to judge by the figures put out each week by the Portuguese Lusitania News Agency--and these have proved fairly accurate in the latter part of the war--and work back retrospectively, the number of guerrilla dead should be between 5,000 and 6,000.

One could never be absolutely certain that all those killed in ambushes, mortar, and bombing attacks have not included some civilians associated with the PAIGC, in much the same way as civilians are sometimes killed in PAIGC onslaughts. History has indicated that innocent deaths are a feature of this type of warfare. Algeria, Kenya, and Vietnam have proved that.

VI

CONVOY

In the realms of battlefield tactics opportunism can be a virtue, but the strategic movement of troops to the battlefield is, by nature, a long-term exercise, demanding foresight and careful planning: inherently it recoils at opportunism. Throughout the Second World War the Axis strategy became riddled by the sort of distorted opportunism that had brought them to power--the waste products of ideology and propaganda.

Major K. J. Macksey M. C.
Author of Afrika Korps

From Gadamael, our young pilot took us on a short hop to what is probably the most beautiful town in the country. Cacine, once the scene of a terrible slaughter between guerrilla and government forces in the earliest stages of the war, lies about twenty miles from Gadamael, not far from the coast.

Suddenly, as you approach the town, swampland gives way to higher ground alongside the river; mangroves yield to oil palms, and the watery morass undergoes a manmade metamorphosis to rice paddies. The only quality missing from this otherwise Asian scene was the sloping Taiwan grass hats and baggy pants of the peasants, for, from where we flew, Cacine could as easily have been set in the Phillipines or on the Asian mainland as the local villagers working in the fields could have been thought to be Cambodian farmers.

The old port, whose recorded history goes back centuries, lies at the estuary of the river after which it had been named at the southern tip of the country, perhaps five miles from the Guinea-Conakry frontier. Cabral's men had made determined bids to capture the region early in the war, but Lisbon, recognising the strategic significance of the harbour, held on tenaciously, at the cost of many lives, civilian and military. More recently, PAIGC had upgraded their priorities and preferred to concentrate on the interior where government development projects were slowly and deliberately taking shape.



"Mines: half a pace"--indicating the omnipresent use of mines in this war.

We landed at Cacine Airport, about a mile from the town, again with an impressive guard in attendance. But instead of going directly into the town, we were taken to a nearby aldeamentos from where, we were told, we were to be escorted to the town nearest the border, Cameconde, about four miles farther south.

It was already well into the afternoon and as our host, a young infantry lieutenant, was anxious to return to Cacine before night-fall, he urged we hurry as we were to spend the rest of the daylight hours at Cameconde. We had three hours, perhaps a little longer.

At the aldeamentos where our convoy was supposed to be waiting for us, the scene was quietly domestic. Women pounded their millet in tall wooden bowls, children, unconcerned by the affairs of war, played around the jeep. The scene could have been set anywhere else in Africa besides war-torn Guinea. The only hint of danger was a large sign on the edge of the village which warned in roughly painted block capitals "MINAS a 1/2 PASSO": Mines--half a pace. The area surrounding the village had been mined to deter guerrillas from attacking.

In spite of the apparent quietude, there was no convoy. Two well-armed African guards greeted our jeep from their improvised fortifications at either end of the camp--44-gallon drums filled with concrete and placed together with just enough slit-space showing through which to aim a rifle. They sloped arms smartly as Alcada passed. Majors were a rarity in these parts.

We asked about our convoy. The guards could not say. It had left about an hour before with the mail for Cameconde and had not returned. Alcada was impatient and was obviously keen to sleep at Tite that evening. I was determined to settle for Cacine.

Alcada suggested we visit the camp another time, but I knew that if it was not to be this time it would never be. Once I had left Cacine at the southern extreme of the enclave, the town would be a memory for we were unlikely to return. There were more important things to see elsewhere. While I was there I felt we should make the best of it.

What did I want to do? Alcada asked, taking it for granted that I would not risk traveling through to the camp without an escort. "We go to Cameconde," I ventured, reminding him casually of the purpose of my visit. His eyes widened. "You are happy to go without the convoy?" he asked, somewhat surprised.

Not for a moment thinking he would take me up on it, I said, Yes. What else? We could take the risk together; after all, we would not be walking.

Not to be outdone by a smart-aleck journalist and probably still smarting from our earlier encounter, Alcada broke into a flurry of Portuguese directed at the young lieutenant who had met us at the airport. They talked a short while and drew a map or two in the dust which lay heavy on the bonnet of the jeep. Then Alcada turned to me again and said curtly, accenting his last word: "Right. You want to go. We go." He had called my bluff and I could hardly back down then. I asked the obvious. "How many of us would travel in the jeep? "

"Four," he replied brusquely, "and two guns."

"No grenades?" I queried. He said there were none and there was not enough time to go looking for additional weapons and men. "This is how you want it, is it not?" he asked. I mustered a wry smile.

And so we went. We managed to rustle up one more gun in the aldeamentos, and a black soldier on leave, so we were five. I sat at the back of the jeep between two burly Africans, each with his G-3 rifle at the ready. Alcada had the other gun and he sat up front next to the driver, the lieutenant.

There were about four miles of jungle road ahead of us, and I had heard enough of the war to try to make my six-foot-two-inch frame as unobtrusive as possible, beard, beret and all, in the back of the jeep. It was hardly a pleasant experience for any of us. The prospect of an ambush worried me least. The jungle was unbelievably thick on all sides of the track, silent and menacing. Anyone who wanted to take a pot-shot at us could have done so easily enough, but our safety lay in the fact that the road was overgrown. Attack from this quarter was, therefore, unlikely. This much, experience of African wars had taught me. Heavy undergrowth obstructs the field of vision and although the enemy would have heard us coming for miles and would have had the opportunity to prepare an ambush, the target would have passed them by moments after it had come into position. There had been ambushes here, I was to learn later, but they were few and far between and were usually restricted to foot and pica patrols.

No, it was the mines which really terrified me. Anti-vehicle mines which are able to blow a jeep like the one we were traveling in to scrap.

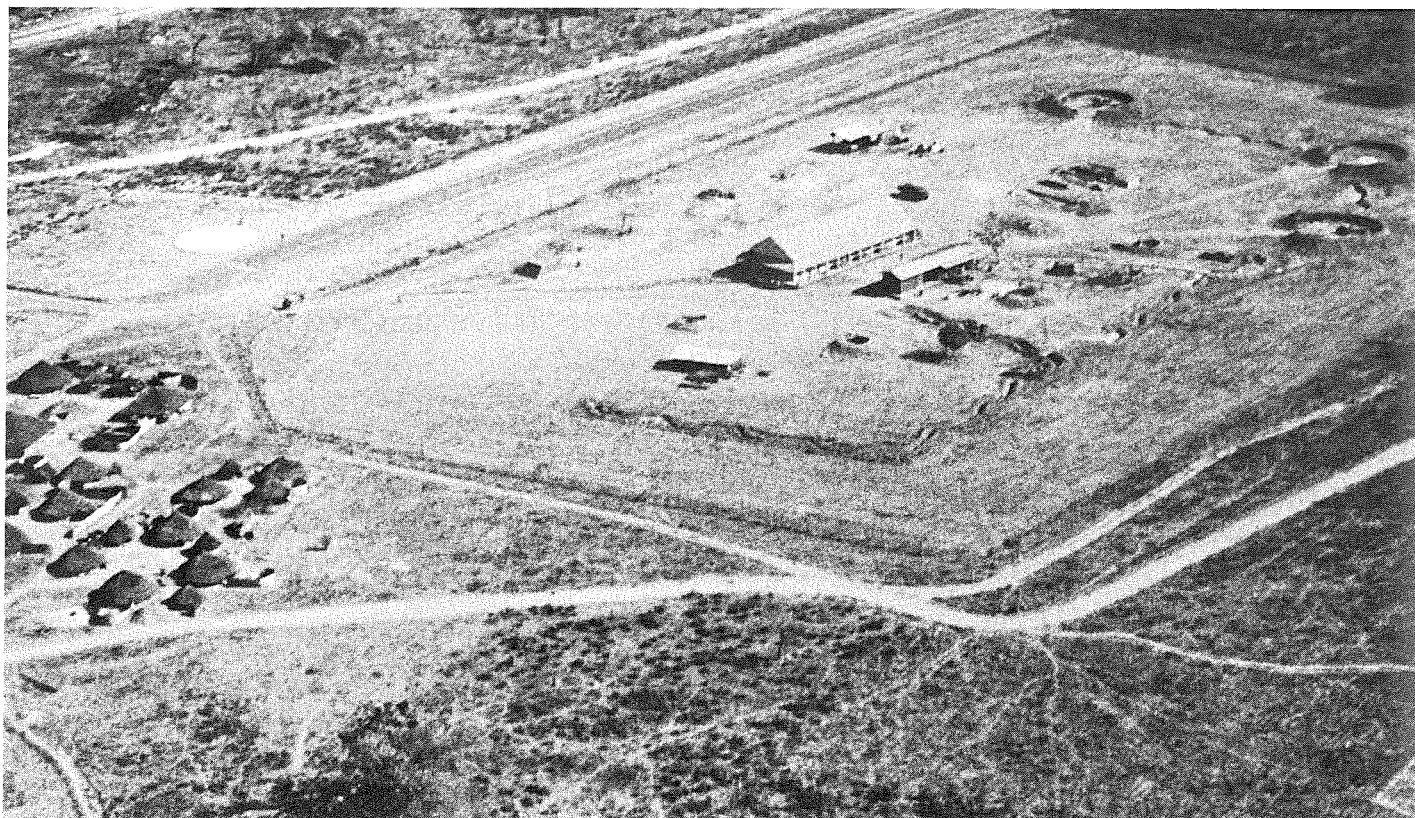
I had spotted a few wrecks at Gadamael, big trucks which had had their entire cabs and front suspension blasted to pulp. Another wreck, a Mercedes troop-carrying Unimog which lay near one of the big guns in the camp, had twelve people on board when it hit a mine in the Guilege Corridor a month before. Three soldiers had died instantly and another later, in hospital in Bissau. Everyone on board at the time was injured, one or two of them seriously. A Unimog is about three times the size of a jeep.

The ride from Cacine Airport to Cameconde was one of the shortest trips I'd undertaken in the African bush. In another sense it was also the longest, for it seemed ages as we passed from one clump of mangrove to another along the tortuous track. My ill-fitting camouflage uniform, obligatory for all newsmen entering the war zone, only seemed to accentuate my size. Certainly I felt I was towering over the two men on either side of me, offering the waiting guerrillas a choice, exposed target. Who were they to know who was observer and who was not? After all, we were all dressed in the same uniform and the vehicle was bristling with firepower. More than one of my unlucky colleagues had been killed while traveling with military convoy units in the Congo, Biafra, and Vietnam.

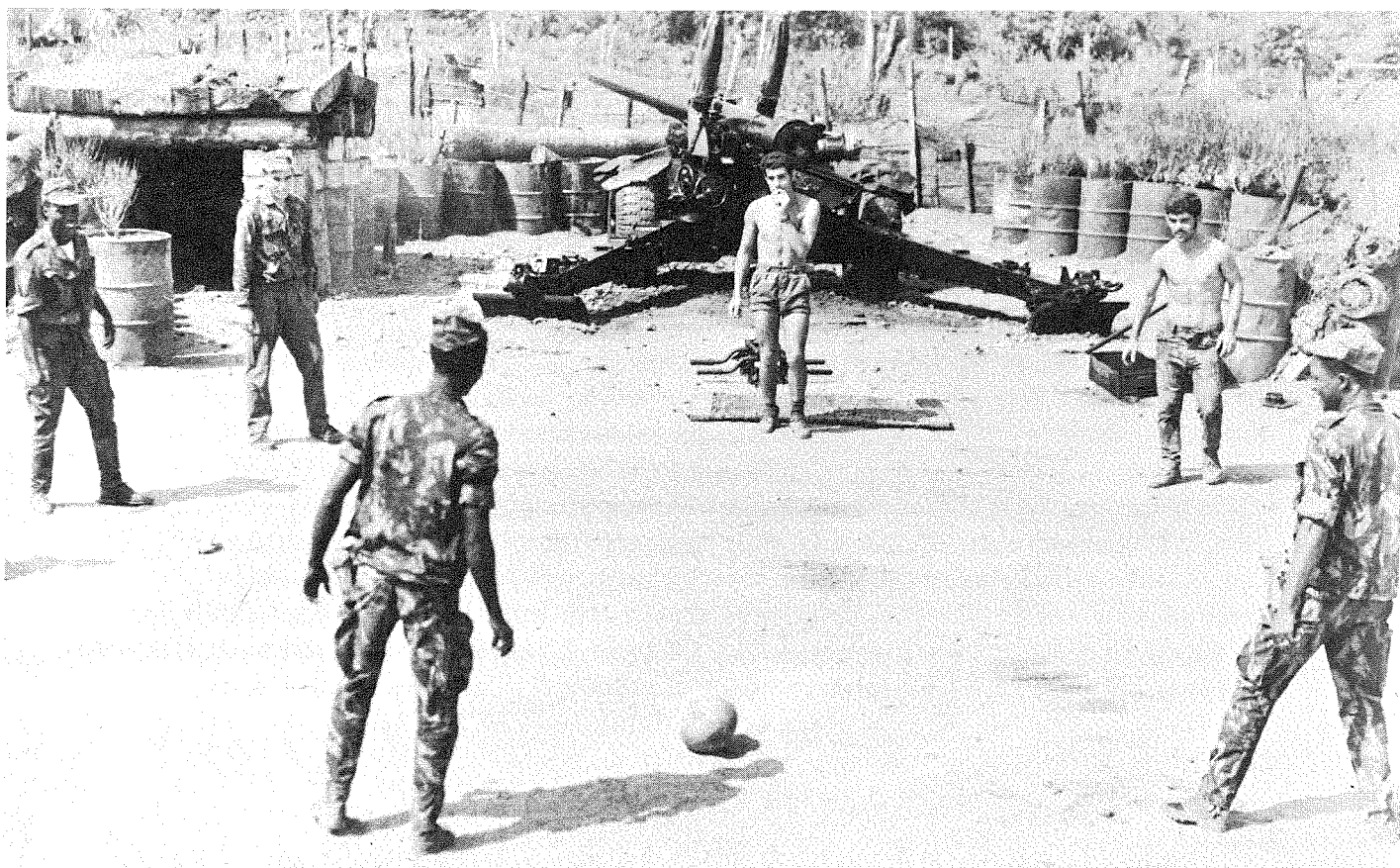
There was nothing I could do but smile confidently and make affable retorts to Alcada every time he had something to say. Even he had become amicably talkative. I cannot remember what he said, or what I replied.

The end of our brief, tense ride came quite suddenly. We turned smartly around one of the blind corners, avoided a depression in the road (through my mind passed a vision of a mine, planted on the verge of the track over which our wheels were about to pass), when three trucks loomed ahead, coming in the opposite direction. The convoy was returning to Cacine. I did not cheer. Nor did I or anyone else in the jeep have anything immediate to say, though I'm sure we all wanted to. The relief on my face must have been as obvious as it was on Alcada's, for the young lieutenant smiled at both of us. He turned to me.

"M'sieu," he said, his young face shining through under his camouflage cap. There was no distinguishing badge of rank on his uniform, for the officers had removed their pips before we set out, as those in charge are generally the first targets in any ambush. He continued in French, "This is a guerrilla war. It is different from Vietnam and Biafra. Our trip was a short one and we were all expecting something



Fortifications around a Portuguese armed camp in the Guilege zone in the south. Note heavy guns (roundels) surrounded by ragged trench lines.



A moment of relaxation while the big guns stand idle in the south, near Cacine.

to happen. But it never happens that way. It's when you are not expecting it that things start popping about you." He laughed easily. So did Major Alcada because he knew his subordinate was right. "But it's merde all the same," the lieutenant added, almost as an afterthought, as we pulled to a halt alongside the transport truck which carried a heavy calibre machine gun planted on three concrete pods on the carrier. The troops waved a greeting and enjoyed having their pictures taken.

Cameconde was similar to Gadamael, but it was also different--more vital, in its own way. There were trenches, guns, and troops. Everything to do with the war was there. At the same time there was an uneasiness about the place which I had not felt previously. The border, I gathered, was within spitting distance, and the PAIGC had a field hospital and a radio relay station only a couple of miles away. The officer in charge said that from the roof of the officers' mess it was possible to see one of the aerials of the enemy installation. It made it all seem too near.

There were about 100 men at Cameconde. They seemed uncertain of their surroundings as well, for most were armed, even in their off-duty hours. They were tense, but not unduly so. Some of the men played football at the far end of the camp near one of the big guns which pointed south, but even as they passed a ball between them, their guns had been placed nearby, in the shadow of one of the buildings which served as some sort of an observation post.

This time Alcada let me speak with whom I wished and went his own way while I was in the camp. I questioned Captain Jose Campos at length. He was the officer in charge. Also, this time, I accepted a large whisky he offered me.

The enemy in the vicinity were numerous, he said, but so were his patrols. The captain always had one group in the jungle; about 25 or 30 men went out at a time. His men would spend a couple of days in the bush searching for PAIGC units. They made occasional contact, usually with groups heading north. Sometimes they, in turn, were found by the guerrilla troops. His losses, he maintained, had been comparatively light in the past year and a quarter that he and his men had been there. A few had been killed, more wounded. There had been one bad accident when a grenade had gone off while one of the men was fiddling with the pin. One man had been killed and two others badly wounded about the body and face. Both had been blinded.

In contrast to other camps his losses were light, he agreed, but then

he might have been lucky, and he was not really in the thick of it as were some camps north of Guilege and in the Oio region. He had been responsible for the training of the men with him at Cameconde and, because he knew beforehand where he would be based, he had tried to make each and every one of his men into an efficient, independent unit, capable of holding his own under any conditions and versatile, too, in the event of adversity. His men had hated the route marches, repeated assault courses, and early morning two-hour runs, but his efforts, he held, had paid off. They now understood what it was all about.

The captain, who had also fought in Moçambique in his time, had many problems. One of the first, he said, had been the men who had been conscripted. Sixty percent of those who passed through the gates of the camp near Lisbon, he asserted, did their first physical exercise of their lives the day they were taken into his care. P. T. as such is not a feature of Portuguese schools. He was unhappy with this state of affairs in the Metropolis where the nation spent more time talking about sport--especially football--than playing any.

"The boys from Angola and Moçambique are much healthier generally." They played in the sun from childhood, he said, like the Africans. "Those are the really tough ones who adapt easily."

The continentals, though not generally as astute or as fast off the mark as their French and British cousins, were of good, solid peasant stock who learnt easily and who also eventually adapted themselves to these unsavoury conditions, he maintained. "And conditions are shocking after you have spent a year out here in the jungle on your own." It was these same privations which had, in time, turned the Danish, British, Dutch, and Spanish away from this stretch of West African coast towards the more equable climes farther south, the Caribbean, or to the east, on the Indian Ocean.

The captain used the word "peasant" easily. A fastidious aristocrat, he was unabashedly class conscious, maintaining that people should know their place in life. He deplored what he termed "the tyranny of the masses." He came from a wealthy family who had strong business connections throughout the Lusitanian empire, and he felt he knew how to deal with these boys. Most were country yokels who came from indigent backgrounds and served under him. He treated them all as though he were some benign old patriarch, though he was not very much older than any of them. Fair but hard, he said. He got the results he sought.

What about his African troops, I asked, probing for some gesture which could link his upper crust background with racial antipathies. He replied casually, "You know, we as a nation have been tied up with Africa in one way or another for five hundred years. During that time there has been discrimination, brutal discrimination, in one way or another, not only between black and white but often much more ruthlessly between white and white and one class and another. But this discrimination could hardly be as general or as widespread as some of our critics would like to believe. You have to look at our large mulatto population to see that, and God, they certainly had contact there. We Portuguese have left our mark on Africa, but so has Africa on us," he said, pointing to the men on the parade ground a few yards beyond the officers' mess. "Look for yourself. We are a tawny race and it was not only the Moors who did that."

He backed up his personal argument a little later by introducing me to his African number two who had just returned from a patrol. The two men greeted each other warmly as the black man came into the mess, still in his camouflage uniform. I was introduced to Lieutenant Andrade Puto, a young veteran of Portugal's war in Guinea. Puto came from Pirada in the northeast. Like Bacar, he was a Fula. The captain had specifically asked for Puto to be placed on his staff on his arrival in the country. He had his own reasons for doing this, he said seriously, and one of them was certainly not to impress the rare journalist who passed along this southern route.

Captain Campos and his black aide offered me an insight to the type of man their forces were fighting. Having had experience in this type of warfare over a number of years, both men were well placed to judge the African Guerrilla of the seventies.

PAIGC, Campos said, was in a class of its own. Its regular army, known as FARP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of the People), was subordinate to the Party (PAIGC). Unlike Angola's MPLA or Frelimo in Moçambique, which had challenged Portugal's presence on the east coast, PAIGC forces were organised on the lines of a conventional army. The men in the field, those guerrillas at present in operation against his men, had been well trained. Their mentors were mostly Russian, Cuban, some Czechs, and an occasional North Vietnamese or Chinese. These men had done a good job compared to the black guerrillas fighting in Angola or Moçambique, for when they made contact they stood and fought, blow for blow. Their tenacity impressed him. It frightened his men at times. The insurgents took their orders from their officers and usually only withdrew when told to do so, even

when losses had been heavy or when events had not worked out quite according to plan. He had seen this for himself on a few occasions.

His own camp came under attack fairly regularly, but it was a rare event for the PAIGC units to make an onslaught past the perimeter of the camp. As with Gadamael it was usually a few shells or mortars fired at random. Real conflict came in the bush when the men were on patrol.

I questioned him about the convoy we had arrived with--the need for elaborate protective measures and the very real threat of an ambush, as indicated by the Portuguese protective measures. "No one can deny that the threat is there. And there are no buts. The guerrillas are active. Of that there can be no dispute. It must be remembered, however, that they have no vehicles of their own and here we stand at a disadvantage. They are a silent enemy, while we disclose our presence and intentions by the use of vehicles. So they have the advantage of surprise as they can mostly hear us coming for miles, except for the men out on patrol on foot.

"And because of the nature of the country, they know exactly where the wheels of the trucks will go, for the jungle allows no deviation such as in Eastern Angola or Caprivi or parts of Rhodesia where the land is sparse and open, almost like a desert in parts. Here mines play a big role," he said, pointing at the road we had come along an hour earlier.

"It is indicative of their striking power that as soon as a road has been tarred and they can no longer use their land mines as effectively as before, their attacks fall off and they tend to concentrate elsewhere where there are still laterite tracks which can be laid beforehand." This, he said, had been proved elsewhere in the country. Often.

In the estimate of Captain Campos, PAIGC insurgents had infiltrated much of Guinea, but it was certainly nowhere near the 80 percent figure claimed by the rebel leaders. If it was a third, he reckoned, it was a lot, and of that, they really only "controlled" a small percentage of the country, including the Boe southeast region where the government had pulled out altogether because of the low population factor and often insurmountable logistic problems, particularly during the rainy season when the area was turned into a giant morass. In the balance of the country where the PAIGC was active, every inch was contested by government forces. The guerrilla units in these areas, he agreed, were there, but so were the Portuguese and this

was where the war was at its worst. In contrast there was another substantial portion of the enclave which did not fall within the war zone at all, but where the military presence under Spínola was a security measure which discouraged the PAIGC from sweeping further afield. Much of the east, he said, was static militarily.

Looking about him at the jungle and road beyond, young Captain Campos ended his talk on a philosophical note.

"This region you are in now has been ravaged by war. But it was not so long ago that it was here that the white or mulatto trader ruled supreme in his own corner of Africa in the same way as the soldiers do today with their guns.

"The traders have gone," he mused, looking into his glass and then up at me and the black officer sitting with us. "But the profit structure has remained through it all. Only the stakes are much higher now."

VII

NIGHT ATTACK

Political mobilization is the most fundamental condition for winning the war: The people may be likened to water and the army to the fish who inhabit it. With the common people of the whole country mobilized, we shall create a vast sea of humanity and drown the enemy in it.

Mao Tse-tung

The sound came as a heavy coughing grunt from somewhere in the tropical darkness outside, followed by another, then yet another. Moments later a high inrushing noise like a sheet being ripped from end to end culminated in a heavy explosion nearby. In the officers' mess where we sat at dinner, a blast of air swept through, shattering windows on all sides.

Shells started falling all around the camp, followed by the irregular dull plops from remote mortar positions beyond the barbed-wire defences. These broke the pattern of the heavy artillery explosions and sounded like firecrackers being set off in a large hollow hall. It is strange, but whatever the origin of a mortar--British, American, Russian, or Chinese--they all sound the same under fire. The mortar has a character all its own.

These mortars, I knew, were Communist Chinese. I had been told so by one of the officers who rushed out into the night the moment the first detonations had sounded. "Chinese," the man had shouted above orders being hastily issued by the camp commandant at the head of the table. He knew, as he had experienced this kind of attack before.

"Get under the table and stay there until it's all over," the officer had shouted. Within seconds the camp batteries opened up from all points around the enclosure.

Bacar had also rushed out into the night. It would be over in ten minutes, he told me peremptorily over his shoulder as he scuttled for the door. It was his job, I learnt later, to assess the direction

and distance from which the attack had come and to send out a patrol if he felt contact could be made with the enemy. Apparently it could not. The attackers were more than an hour's hard march away.

I had been left alone in the mess after everyone had rushed out into the dark to cope with the emergency. Out of curiosity perhaps, or maybe fearful that the Tite officers' mess would take a direct hit from one of the shells, I followed the men outside and crouched low in the shadow of a huge baobab tree and watched a 105mm Howitzer crew load, fire, reload, and fire again. They loosed 15 or 20 rounds at what they thought were the various enemy positions, each barrage to a pre-determined point of the compass. Degrees and elevation of each shot were called out by the officer in charge from a board he held in his hand which was lit by the pencil beam of a pocket torch. His figures were repeated in a gruff, bucolic voice by the gun aimer who hardly looked as if he sensed the urgency of the occasion, for his movements were slow and deliberate. Cool, others would say.

Three shells were fired at one position; three at another; then back to the first target again. All guns were aimed south, the direction the attack had originally come from. The men worked to clockwork precision. The only sounds above the roar of the big guns and exploding shells were the direction and altitude readings given by the officers and answered by the men, navy fashion. They knew what they were after for they had started firing before the fifth or sixth enemy shell had hit Tite.

In five minutes it was all over. A cloud of white and orange smoky dust hung in the air. The acrid smell of high explosive burnt our nostrils. Although the camp was blacked out, the scene was lit by a diffused kind of light from the almost full moon which had started moving towards its evening apogee late in the afternoon, while it was still light. And when the moon is bright it is surprising how much light there is in the African bush. Only much later would an inky blackness descend on the same scene once the moon had disappeared over the horizon. The officers slowly ambled back to the mess in twos and threes, about twenty of them in all.

"Terrorists," Joao Bacar laughed when he walked in. Strains of violence had emboldened his usually passive character. His black face glistened in the light of the oil lamp the steward had placed near the bar. It was too soon to start the generators again, one of the

other officers commented. "There might be another attack later."

Bacar's beret was perched perkily on the side of his head. "The bastards said they would hit us and they did," he said. "Perhaps someone has tipped them off that a foreign journalist is staying with us and they wanted to give you something to write home about." He turned to talk to his commanding officer in Portuguese. "The hour of seven had arrived when those shells started falling," said another officer on my right. Many Portuguese soldiers say you can often set your watch by it, for seven is the hour when most guerrilla attacks take place, shortly after it gets dark.

"The big guns that hit us were Russian," the commandant told me later after he had assessed the damage. None of his soldiers had been killed, he said, but two civilians in a nearby tabanca, alongside the camp, had been blasted to oblivion after their home had taken a direct hit. There were seven wounded, including a woman who had lost a leg.

What was more serious, he commented, was that the guns were 122mm long-range Russian artillery and that it was the first time they had been brought so far into the enclave in the war. "The last time they were fired in anger was in Biafra," he added solemnly. I later ascertained that the 122mm guns had that night added a new phase to Portugal's African military campaigns. The guns, Lisbon declared shortly afterwards, had been given to the PAIGC earlier in the year by Nigeria. It was General Yakubu Gowon's first positive gesture to terrorism in Africa.

Nor was that the end of the story. The following morning two Soviet-supplied Mig-17 jet fighters flew low over Tite en route to Bissau. The Migs circled once, their pilots obviously intent on seeing the extent of damage inflicted the evening before. The airmen, Portuguese intelligence determined later, were also Nigerian.

PAIGC did not strike at Tite again that night. The attack they had carried out had borne indifferent results. Twenty-four shells had fallen on and in the vicinity of the camp, but most had landed beyond the defence perimeter. Some of these had hit the civilian quarter.

The garrison at Tite, I was told by the C.O., Lt. Col. Baptista Lopes, another Moçambican veteran, worked to a precise routine whenever an attack came, on average once a month. "The first three shells we fire from each of the large guns are automatic. The guns are already set on a target and we just pull the trigger. When they

have fired their three shots, we re-set the sights and fire three more shots at a new target, and so on, until we think we have covered the full range of possibilities. It's quite simple."

There were not many places in the surrounding jungle from which the insurgents could organise an attack, the colonel affirmed. Each one of the sites used previously had been pinpointed and it was at these positions that the guns were aimed. "They always seem to go back to the same old places. Tomorrow we will go and see."

How effective were the Howitzers? I asked. Under the circumstances, the colonel could think of nothing better for countering an enemy onslaught. They were neither too large nor too small and were ideal for this kind of warfare. The enemy rarely attacked up close, usually stalking up to within a few miles of the settlement. For this reason the big guns had proved fine retaliatory weapons. But the long range Russian guns had presented problems because the enemy was now able to attack at a distance greater than the range of the Howitzers. "Of course that will also lower their accuracy margin."

The Howitzers were part of Portugal's multi-national armoury, the colonel explained. They were originally German, dating from the pre-World War 2 period. "But we have replaced their original barrels with American ones. The ammunition we use is of our own manufacture." These were similar to the weapons I had seen at Gadamael and Cameconde and what I would see in other camps in the north and east of the territory.

When we were once again seated around the mess table, the colonel spoke about Bacar's role in the war. Bacar was part of his "team," he said, indicating with his eyes towards the Fula officer across the table. The captain at this moment was vigorously outlining a plan of counter-attack to another officer alongside him. This African officer headed a recently-established fighting unit known as the Comandos Africanos, an elite group of hand-picked black soldiers who, in the short time they had operated as a unit, had distinguished themselves in battle time and again. Their fighting and tactical prowess was as renowned in Portuguese Guinea as it was in the Guinea Republic and Senegal. They enjoyed an élan of their own which was not matched by any of the white or mixed-race Metropolitan units.

Five other black commando officers were attached to the same mess. One of them, Lieutenant Jimenez, a Futa-Fula like Bacar, sat opposite me. He did not have much to say but was friendly, like all the people

of his race, to the point of embarrassment, smiling and nodding his head each time our eyes met. "A good fighter, that Jimenez," one of the other officers acknowledged when he heard I was to go out with him on patrol in the morning. "He is as unconventional in his tactics as he is in his dress. He prefers a light-coloured woolen astrakhan to a cap and you will never see him without his Kalashnikov. That gun is his Excalibur; he took it from a man in the jungle after he had killed him with his knife."

The other black officer present in the group was a huge friendly hulk of a man, Alfares¹ Tomaz who, though only recently commissioned, had come through a number of actions with flying colours. Tomaz had been recommended for a decoration after a particularly weird attack in which one of his men was wounded and dazed by an enemy RPG-2 rocket. Instead of lying low and waiting for a medic or the enemy to withdraw, the soldier staggered, shell-shocked and aimless, through the trees with bullets popping all around him. Tomaz left the safety of his own position, sprinted through the jungle towards the man, picked him up like a bag of string beans, and brought him through to safety. The man he had rescued was now fighting again.

Tomaz was of Sierra Leonian stock. That much he knew, but he had no idea how his parents had come to Portuguese Guinea or why. "It certainly wasn't for money," he cracked later when we had a few words together. Tomaz spoke English well and knew some Freetown Creole which his father had taught him. But at the same time this big black officer was proudly Portuguese, and like Bacar, willing to fight to uphold that identity which he considered sacred for reasons of his own. It was an unrealistic and, some would say, unwise dedication which few Europeans or independent Africans understand, but it is that same quality which caused so many black men to fight valiantly for the British in Malaya and with the Rhodesian security forces against African ZAPU-ZANU (Zimbabwe African People's Union and Zimbabwe African National Union) insurgents in the Zambezi Valley.

In size he was probably bigger than Jimenez and Bacar together. He had the strength to lift them both, together with two more like them, and carry them a mile. He was known among his own friends as the "gentle giant," though he was considered a little frivolous by the older officers in the mess.

"It's his youth. He does crazy things at times," said the colonel. Tomaz was only 21 and as young as he was he was regarded by his

¹ Second lieutenant

colleagues as a past master of the art of practical joking. He had once even offered his C. O. an exploding cigar and had been known to doctor the unit's coffee one morning so that everyone, officers and men, had to queue up outside the latrine for 36 hours afterwards. Although a Muslim ("but not a good son of the Prophet") he enjoyed his liquor. In contrast to Bacar and Jimenez, both of whom were staunchly abstemious, Alfares Tomaz drank anything handed to him, including, it was rumoured, methylated spirits, though he denied this. It was said he once drank a bottle of scotch in ten swigs and had then gone out on patrol as many minutes later. In the words of some of the men who served with him, Tomaz was "quite a guy." The men who served under him, even those considerably older than he, loved and respected him, for he had proved himself a proud warrior and a leader of men.

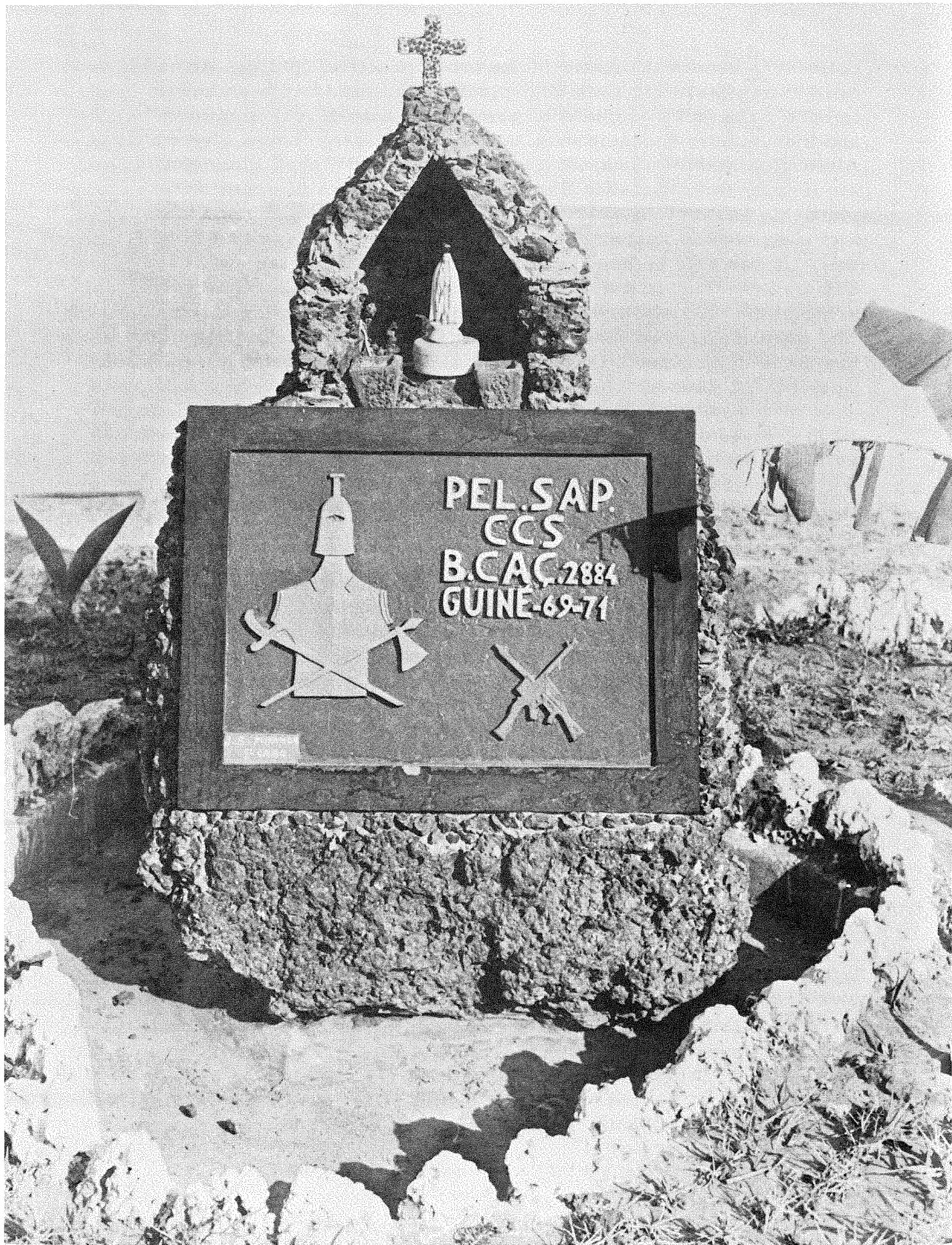
I had arrived at Tite in the long-disputed Quinara region after returning to Bissau with Alcada where I saw the last of the meddling major. I was offered another aide, but refused his services for the time being. I had an understanding of the war by then, I told Lt. Col. Lemos Pires, and preferred to make my own way about. All I asked for was transport.

Bacar was waiting for me at Bissalanca Airport the morning I was lifted to Tite by 'copter. The captain had come across the river to greet me. I had specifically asked to meet the man who was already more than a legend beyond the borders of his own country.

The Fula officer did not have much to say on the way over but kept his eyes glued to the jungle as we sped south. This was his area. At one point he thought he spotted movement in a thick clump of palms about eight miles from our destination. He ordered the pilot to turn and make a closer inspection at tree-top level. Bacar was right. Tiny figures scattered in all directions as we shot past, scant feet above a ragged row of tall trees which surrounded a nearby paddy. We circled a few more times while the pilot gave directions on the radio. Bacar identified the clump on a large-scale map which the pilot handed to him and passed on a row of digits to base. The first Harvards could be seen approaching the site before we continued our journey.

At Tite, I could see it was business from the start. Two Daimler armoured cars greeted us on the runway. We were taken past some pretty formidable defences to the mess.

Colonel Lopes had about 500 men under his command. His was an



Religious symbolism is everywhere. This shrine is in a camp in the north near the Senegalese border.

important zone in the middle of Balanta country and they were often in contact with the enemy. The Balantas in the region--there were about 15,000 of them--were a cautious lot, neither for the enemy nor against them. The position was best summed up by an officer's comment to Jim Hoagland of the Washington Post, who was in the country shortly before I was. The officer was speaking about Balanta country. "There are villages where we go in the day and receive a very good welcome. At night, the terrorists receive a very good welcome, too."

According to the Portuguese, the men of the tribe are a gay, generous lot. They are good workers, good drinkers, and good fighters, whichever side they throw in with. It is not surprising that many PAIGC members are from this tribe, which is also found north of the Geba River. There are also a good many Balantas in the Portuguese Army. As a people they enjoy life. When they throw a party it goes on good and hard, sometimes for more than a day.

The Balantas have some fairly strange customs. Every man, woman, and child in the community are animists, worshipping Ira, their god of fate. They relish a fatalistic creed which is not all that way out as it may seem, for there are many "with-it" European offshoots under a dozen other guises to be found in the civilized world. The nucleus of their belief is simply, what will be, will be; Ira decides which way the cookie crumbles. It was up to the individual to appease his god in his day-to-day considerations, and he did this by making regular offerings of rice or palm wine in a variety of tiny chapels or shrines in every Balanta tabanca. The authorities did not tamper with this belief. Rituals border on ju ju and are conducted by the local Balanta witchdoctor, who charges a small fee for his services. Full-scale Balanta ceremonies are held at all stages of birth and early childhood up to the circumcision stage. Boys as well as girls are circumcised at a certain age, usually about seven or eight.

The Balanta community lived and worked willingly enough under government control. They were administered by a large, obese, self-important civilian district commissioner who ran local affairs from an office in Tite and struck me as distinctly pachydermic, in both senses of the word. He in turn was aided by tribal leaders, most of whom were based on the aldeamentos or nearby tabancas. Tite had formerly been a regional capital and was still an important agricultural area, with rice paddies stretching away in all directions from the camp.

I had arrived a week late, I was told. The previous weekend had been

the annual crop festival known locally as the Quesunde, the most important of all Balanta annual feasts.

Because of the war there had been no Quesunde for many years. PAIGC Command in the area had served notice on tribal elders during this time that they would sanction no festivities while Portuguese rule remained paramount. Countering this move, General Spinola chose to go ahead with the first Quesunde festival for almost a decade. The crops had been reasonable and things were improving all around. The general had told the Balanta nation that there was no time like the present for a little frivolity. PAIGC countered this by declaring that anyone taking part in the festival would be shot.

The feast went ahead in any event, during the April full moon phase. Fifteen thousand Balanta men and women kicked up their heels for three days and nights. There were no guerrilla attacks during the festivities. Immediately afterwards, during my visit to the camp, they hit Tite with all they had. That was the attack I had experienced.

The onslaught graphically illustrated a remark made to me by one of the officers at Tite, Major Art Valente. Speaking excellent English, the major served as an interpreter during my stay in the region which stretched from the Atlantic to Fulacunda and Buba farther east. For every action made by the Portuguese, he said, the enemy reacted likewise. If Spinola endorsed a fiesta, PAIGC demonstrated its disapproval by hurling shells at the camp. If Spinola happened to visit the region for some reason or other, they would retaliate in some other way, if only to make it known that they were still about and active. Spinola did, in fact, visit Tite while I was still in the country. It was the last event I covered before returning to Lisbon. The general handed out medals, in the presence of thousands of local tribesmen, to local civic dignitaries who had stood fast with Portugal during difficult times. The guerrilla ambush in which Bacar was killed followed shortly afterwards.

"It is a point of honour as far as the guerrillas are concerned to counter every move we make," Major Valente told me. "And if they haven't the manpower, they will send for reinforcements and do it later.

"Now we have Bissassema, which to us is a symbol which will demand more counter-action by the PAIGC," he said. Bissassema, Valente explained, was something of a magic word in the region. It was to be the "reincarnation" of a village which had been the Balanta commercial

centre in the area it stood in before the war, about five or six miles from Tite. Lying on the river, Bissassema formerly was a channel for many of the supplies needed by Tite. The war had stopped all that. In 1968 this thriving village had been completely laid waste by the PAIGC because the tribal elders had not come out actively for Cabral.

Bissassema stands in the middle of one of Portuguese Guinea's richest rice-growing regions. Because of the war the fields had not been properly tended for years and only recently had the farmers started harvesting crops on any scale again. Spinola had expressed his intention of rehabilitating the zone primarily because Tite could no longer accommodate all the refugees who sought safety and protection from the war. On paper the task should have been easy, because Bissassema was also a major cattle region. In the early sixties there had been 4,000 head of cattle grazing about the town. All that remained of this herd today was two bulls. The rest had either been killed by the PAIGC or appropriated by them as "enemy spoil" and driven south across the border in Guinea-Conakry. There was nothing either the Balanta or the Portuguese could do about it at the time, but that had been several years previously.

The blueprint to make Bissassema habitable again was already in operation when I arrived at Tite. A well-armed company of soldiers was based at the post and was building houses for the civilian community. A new infrastructure of roads, houses, the military camp, a school, and a clinic had already been laid. The troops were managing to construct about 50 houses a month with the help of local labour, but the supply line from Tite was tenuous, mainly because it was a bush track and had often been mined in the past. Supplies were also brought in by boat from Bissau.

The main priority while I was there was the new road which would be constructed through the jungle from Tite. Colonel Lopes had one month in which to complete it before the rains set in during the following month. For this project he had two large caterpillar tractors, but his task was complicated because the first mile had already been laid but had to be abandoned because it led into the middle of a swamp. One wonders what the Government Surveyors Office in Lisbon had to say about that faux pas.

The road was imperative for the success of the venture, according to the colonel. Because of the presence of the enemy, Bissassema had to be within easy reach of Tite. They also needed to shift an average

of 250 tons of supplies to the new post each month--mostly corrugated iron for the roofs, cement, and fittings. Military supplies also had to go through regularly; not everything could be brought in by air.

Bricks were made on the spot with some new-fangled hydraulic device from America. Roof beams were locally manufactured--palm logs which had been split four ways and were impervious to termite attacks. It is said seriously, by those who have lived here for some time, that Portuguese Guinea is a land where the termite is king. When the rains come nothing stands in the way of the white ant. In the dry season you find his traces all around you--dry dust which rains from every wooden ceiling, balcony, and parapet with each gust of wind. When Bissassema was completed, Colonel Lopes calculated it would house 3,000 people.

PAIGC efforts at disruption had started in earnest fairly recently and that was why Bacar and his men had been brought in from the Oio region where they had been operating. These African commandos had proved themselves an effective weapon against the guerrillas, and they had countered numerous onslaughts in the short time they had been in operation. Bacar knew this and was proud of it. He commented, "When they know we are operating in an area they never allow us to come nearer than 400 metres (quarter mile) before they attack. If they see the patrol is composed of white Portuguese troops, they wait until they can see their eyes, and that's only about 100 metres." "With Bacar they are frightened!" he said early one morning in the mess, slapping his broad chest arrogantly with the palm of his right hand. This was a side of him one rarely saw. There was little doubt that the PAIGC was dealing with a proud and deadly enemy, even more so because he was one of them and knew their ways.

Colonel Lopes expected the worst attacks to come once his men showed signs of completing the road. The PAIGC had warned local tribesmen in numerous surreptitious communications (which always seemed to land in Portuguese hands sooner or later) that they should steer clear of the project and hinder it if at all possible. The most recent pronouncement on the subject had been a claim that the guerrillas would first destroy the road and then take the garrison already at Bissassema. To this end they had attacked the stockade a number of times, but the PAIGC troops were wary. About six months before, they had suffered one of their worst defeats at the camp. In one operation in which the PAIGC had thrown about 150 of its men--the equivalent of about four bi-groups--in a concerted effort to dislodge the Portuguese from their stronghold, the insurgents had been caught

in a cross-fire between the camp and a nearby patrol which had bivouacked, unknown to the guerrillas, in the jungle near the camp. The guerrillas had then tried to escape across a booby-trapped minefield. It was a slaughter and the Portuguese were proud of their success.

The local Balantas were enthusiastic about the project, remarked Colonel Lopes, so much so that the tribal leaders had encouraged the men to aid the authorities wherever possible. Lopes had used the Africans to porter supplies through to Bissassema, using 100 bearers at a time, walking in file, one behind the other like a scene out of an old Edgar Rice Burroughs film. There had been few casualties so far. The PAIGC was wary of firing at civilians, for it was these people they were trying to win over to their side. The porters were paid in rice or money by the Portuguese authorities, according to their own choice.

The PAIGC attempt to stymie the Bissassema project stresses the military aspects of the operations of the guerrilla forces, but it does not conceal the salient characteristics of guerrilla strategy--it was economic and political and involved a measure of intimidation and terror. It was neither offensive nor defensive. It was evasive. In areas where it was felt government control was relatively weak, it went on the offensive, but that rarely happened. It was mostly a case of seeking out the soft spots, and Bissassema, on account of the grim jungle terrain, was one of these, but only while the project was being developed. Once it was finished and had been settled, the centre would easily be able to hold its own.

VIII

JUNGLE PATROL

Wartime armies are made up of professional soldiers and of civilians in uniform. Neither civilians nor soldiers are necessarily warriors, for the former may regret their peaceful callings, while it is not unknown for the latter to prefer the dull round of garrison life to the excitements of campaigning. In truth all too few of either category make warriors, yet it is warriors that win wars.

Brig. Peter Young DSO, MC

The patrol I was to go on with Bacar and his men would take me near to the site of the proposed camp at Bissassema. We would circle the area, hoping to make contact with the enemy. Ambushes would be set as and when it was thought necessary. Bacar would be guided by his native trackers or scouts who accompanied every patrol. These men were mostly of Balanta extraction, and knew the Tite region well.

I was warned by Lt. Jimenez that we would be out for two days, possibly three, and that, as his men were fit, they would move fast, resting perhaps once every four hours. We would sleep in the bush and carry our food with us. I would be allowed one can of water for the time that we were out, carried in a can at my waist. Considering that I was drinking two pints of water before breakfast each day on account of the enervating heat which left me immobile and dehydrated after only an hour, it was a tall order; more so because I had just finished two months of inactive reporting at the International Court of Justice at The Hague on the South West Africa (Namibia) case.

Nevertheless I was keen. Much of the country we would be passing through would be jungle terrain, and anyway, I had fared well under worse conditions in Biafra. Angola and Moçambique were tame by comparison. I felt I should make the grade.

Each of the 30-man patrol was handed his rations on the evening before we left. This consisted of a large box which weighed

about four-and-a-half pounds and contained a tin of sardines, two small tins of sausages, one tin of chocolate milk, and a number of tubes containing a fruit concentrate, marmalade, and butter. Bread was issued separately, just before we departed. Each man was given 4 ounces. The rations were expected to last a soldier two days. And they do, for this package is standard issue throughout Portugal's African wars.

Saturday morning--the day we were scheduled to depart--came and went without the unit's moving into the jungle. We would have to hold over for another 24 hours, the colonel explained. The patrol already in the jungle had made contact with the enemy and were waiting in a particularly favourable ambush position. They had been out two days already, but would wait another. Their food had finished, but the men, the colonel said, were accustomed to hardship. "After all, this is war."

We left the camp in a long file before dawn on Sunday morning. Tite was silent, lying sleeping and unprovoked against a dark jungle screen which crept up on all sides. Occasionally a figure moved in the darkness as we passed; we could hear the guards as they shuffled at their posts, but could see nothing for the bright moon had long since set and the settlement had become the quintessence of blackness.

Bacar took the lead from the start. He had little to say at that hour of the day except that I should stay near Lt. Jimenez who would be my guide for the first leg of the journey. Jimenez remained close to me for all of the two days we were out. Manifestly I was his responsibility.

The tough, disciplined men shuffled past, their faces austere and unsmiling, more because they were still heavy with sleep than on account of what lay ahead. The only one who managed any humour at this ungodly hour was Tomaz, that huge hulk of a boy, who loped up as if he were going off to Sunday School. "Hi," he croaked cheerfully, with a broad flash of white teeth. I don't know how he did it, because he had led the liquor stakes in the mess the night before. Tomaz patted his kit-bag before hurrying forward with the rest. "I'll have something for you here later," he grinned, a glint creasing his bloodshot eyes. "Whisky!" Under the circumstances I would have been quite happy never to see another bottle again. Already I was tempted to reach for my water can and we had not yet left the environs of the camp. The early-morning was cool but still uncomfortable; something to do with the humidity.

The men in the patrol carried a strange assortment of weapons. Of

the 30-odd black soldiers--I was the only white among them--more than half were armed with a new weapon which I had not previously seen in any of Portugal's wars in Africa. This was a rifle-grenade about 15 inches long and protruding about 8 inches from the tip of the barrel. The front end was oblong but was distended around the middle, like a badly swollen finger that had been caught in a door. It was deadly, I was assured by Jimenez. Known as the Instalaza, it was of Spanish design and manufacture and had an effective range of about 400 yards. It could knock out an armoured car, if necessary, but was used mainly in an anti-personnel role in Portuguese Guinea.

The colonel had explained that the Instalaza was a small weapon which provided the infantryman with "real guts." If the unit came under attack, 15 men unleashing this kind of retaliation was enough to send the enemy scurrying. They had had remarkable success with the weapon so far. Not only was it handier than the much bulkier Chinese-supplied RPG-2 rocket in everyday use by the insurgents but it was lighter and more portable. It was also versatile as it could be used against defensive positions if and when encountered.

Another interesting weapon carried by a few of the men was a recoilless rifle, which had been designed and built by Portuguese scientists for the 37mm Matra aircraft rocket. Special firing tubes and dozens of ventilation holes had been adapted, as well as a firing pin operated by small portable batteries fixed to the device, making it all look like an elongated kitchen utensil rather than a sophisticated device of war. The warhead was French and packed a powerful punch. Each "operator" carried 25 of the rockets in special sleeves about his body, making him a highly efficient and destructive fighting unit on his own.

Three mortars were included in our patrol, one each, fore and aft, and one in the centre, near where I walked. Three soldiers ahead and three behind each mortar carrier had strapped to their belts four of the oblong, well-shaped little bombs, which dangled dangerously as they walked, swaying to and fro and connecting loudly with protruding bits of metal or their rifle butts. Only when we reached the "conflict" zone, some miles from the camp, were these bits and pieces bound with cloth. Lt. Jimenez assured me that so far none had gone off accidentally. I took him at his word for one of the men walked just ahead of us, his belt hanging with bombs.

Each member of the patrol was armed with two grenades which were suspended from their uniform lapels and protruded from their top

pockets. Grenade belts were provided, but the men preferred it this way apparently. It made for easier access in an emergency, one of them told me.

It took about an hour for the dawn to clear. By then we were well away from the camp, moving west all the time. We would reach a position south of Bissassema and then turn north, Bacar said, before we departed. After that we would double back on our tracks again. Only when the first rays of the sun lifted over the horizon did the troops perk up a little. They had been silent until then. Light-hearted banter was thrown about in muffled and desultory Portuguese undertones. The men talked freely while we were still in open country, moving from one rice paddy to another, but they quietened suddenly as the first stretch of jungle loomed up ahead of us. This, Jimenez whispered, was enemy country. From here on in we were on our own.

Bacar worked to a set plan. Whenever the patrol approached an area where an ambush could possibly be established by the enemy, he detached some of his men and sent them forward independently. More of the men with some heavier weapons were brought forward to give fire support should it be needed. Others were sent round the flanks. On two occasions in the past Bacar had found that an enemy ambush group had withdrawn in the face of this encircling action. In truth, the tactic was only possible in open country where easy movement was practicable. In some parts it was impossible to leave the track, as we were moving alongside heavy undergrowth on both sides of us.

At other times Bacar would move his men carefully a few miles down a jungle grove and then immediately double back along the route he had just come. On one occasion, as we marched, he deliberately flanked a huge patch of palms and bush, keeping his troops about 800 yards out in the open paddy field, out of any really effective firing range.

"We are waiting for them to present themselves," he told me later in the day. "The PAIGC uses the Maoist principle of constant tactical retreat and they strike only when they are certain of doing damage and then withdraw hastily. This way we hope to draw them into making contact or perhaps making a mistake." He called it "tantalising" the enemy and in so doing his men took chances, but they were all calculated risks.

Part of the problem facing Bacar and other Portuguese officers in



Portuguese army officers in touch with base while on patrol.

this war was that the enemy rarely stood and fought. They would hit and run--strike at a camp and melt into the jungle to avoid concerted retaliation. These black troops were eager to match force with their black rebel compatriots. But PAIGC directives captured in the war pointedly and repeatedly warned that serious contact with government forces was to be avoided.

We made our first long stop at noon, for a meal. Some of the men ate in small groups between the trees while others stood guard out of sight in the jungle beyond. Afterwards the procedure was reversed. When everyone had finished we left, but I noticed immediately that our patrol had thinned out somewhat. About a third of the men, following pre-arranged instructions, had melted into the jungle and set up an ambush position.

"We are under no misconceptions that the enemy does not know we are here. We are moving from one area to another, often across open country and paddies and they see us when we march. Once we are spotted they will try to keep tabs on our movements. If they are about, they will see us stop and only follow once we have moved away and that's why I have left some of the men behind. If they come in--bub! we have them! At least that's the story in theory," Jimenez explained.

We had had a short break earlier, at about 11 o'clock that morning. Bacar had sent off some of his men to check a booby-trap position. We had been moving at a fast pace all the while and must have covered at least 20 miles by then, over some fairly difficult terrain. There had been aircraft passing across our line of vision at various times, followed by some fairly concentrated bombing to the southeast of us. The targets, towards Buba and Fulacunda, were visual, I was informed. Though we could be seen from the air, we were safe because our position was constantly being radioed to base and, in turn, passed on to Bissau. During my trips across the country I constantly saw patrols out in the bush, and it amazed me that the operations centre could keep track of so many fragmentary groups in the field. The responsibility on the pilots must have been heavy, for it would have been easy to mistake their own men for the enemy. Both are invariably dressed in camouflage.

Bacar made contact with Tite each hour on the hour. His radio operator was always close on his heels, lugging a big American-built "Man-Pak" transmitter which, he said, could reach Bissau if necessary. He had called for air strikes before, especially if he saw

the guerrillas slipping away before the unit had been able to make contact, but it required precision bombing on the part of the airmen, as Bacar's own men were never far behind. The fact that his troops had never been fired on or bombed in error spoke volumes for Bacar's accurate directions, for his men were sometimes only a few hundred yards behind the guerrillas while on the chase.

Bacar also kept in radio contact with the extremities of his own patrol. Three walkie-talkie sets were used by the officers often spread out over a distance of a mile or more in the more difficult country. "They are very handy when the enemy is about," Bacar said, for once stating the obvious. Thanks to the radios, orders were rarely shouted in the jungle, for sound travels miles in this humid climate. They were first relayed by radio and then passed on down the line from man to man.

It was noon, shortly before we had our first bite, that we made contact with the patrol that was waiting to be relieved. We met them along an overgrown ridge of high ground that I had seen from a distance earlier on in the day. Bacar had deliberately avoided going directly there on the off-chance that any guerrillas lurking nearby would move in the direction of his colleagues lying in ambush.

The patrol which had preceded us into the jungle was led by two native Guineans, Lt. Alphonse and a young Alfares. Both men were dressed like our own with one curious difference: they wore gleaming black monkey-skins over their heads--large shiny bouffants which made them look more animal than man when glimpsed from a distance in the heavy undergrowth. There was an element of camouflage in this unusual covering, but it must have been as uncomfortable as hell in the sticky heat of day, which was oppressive even in a pair of underpants. For these officers, however, their skin headdresses had considerable significance. Monkey-skins have meaningful tribal overtones in Africa. After the lion and the leopard, the skin of some apes and other anthropoids hold a certain mystical charm for many tribes. There are some who believe they are the reincarnation of departed souls and are to be accorded reverence whenever encountered in the forest. In certain areas of the Niger Delta, Liberia, and Congo, monkeys are rarely killed and then only to provide a chief or Oba with his badge of office. In Guinea the ritual apparently has similar connotations.

The men we had made contact with had been out on their own for close on 60 hours and were tired and hungry. They had not made contact

with the enemy as expected, though it had been close. Lt. Alphonse did not elaborate. Because their stay in the bush had been longer than expected, Bacar had brought along a few supplies and additional water which were handed over with little ceremony. The patrol left immediately, as we had arrived, melting silently away into the surrounding bush. They were keen to get back to their families. Like our own unit there were no white faces among them; they were surprised to see mine. Words of parting were cursory. A raised hand, a salute. Then they were gone.

We passed numerous villages during the course of our trek. A few were abandoned, though many were thriving. They were typical of the tabancas found throughout West Africa--a medley of children, goats, chickens, an occasional skeletal hound which cowered at the approach of humans, and sometimes a monkey or a parrot at the end of a stretch of rope or cord. Always there were women pounding corn somewhere near the verge of the settlement, within sight of the roadway or track. If there was trouble, they were the first to spot it and give warning. The villages were domestic and secure, reflecting a deceptive languid content which lay on this land that had been wracked by almost a decade of war.

Jimenez and Tomaz took few chances in some of the remoter areas where loyalties followed the traditional jungle law of not sticking your neck out if you don't have to. Whenever we approached a tabanca which was not familiar to the men, the two of them would go ahead with their hands on their revolvers and make sure we did not have a PAIGC reception committee waiting for us. Only when friendly contact had been assured did we pass on. The PAIGC passed here as often as we did and the civilians had long ago accepted the philosophy of a hand of friendship to all comers in order to survive in a region where death stalked everywhere.

Once we stopped at a tabanca fairly near Bissassema. It was late afternoon and we would eat here before going on for the night, I was told. The village was evidently used by both forces, as we were welcomed with unrestrained courtesy. Bacar accepted the gesture in good faith. It was an uneasy symbiosis but a pragmatic one in the fluctuating fortunes of war. These people, Bacar felt, would eventually choose for themselves on which side their allegiance lay. If things continued as they were, he said, it would not be on the side of the PAIGC.

The men of the patrol mixed easily with the local tribesmen and their

families. They were accepted with amity; some even shared their food, as probably the food of the next PAIGC patrol contingent that passed this way would be. The intrusion lasted barely an hour. It ended when Bacar called his men to order and led them out of the camp.

Apart from improving relations between the government and the people generally, Bacar maintained that the army was always cordial in its relations with the peasants. The PAIGC, he said, followed Mao and Giap's theory on how relations with the civilians were to be conducted. An insurgent directorate had declared early on in the war that PAIGC forces were to be concerned with establishing and maintaining good relations with all country people, whatever their political affiliations. PAIGC policy was based upon the identity of their aims. This maxim had been included in the PAIGC code of honour, which took the form of an oath. It declared that "in contact with the people each comrade would follow three recommendations: to help the people, to respect the people, and to defend the people."

"You see we have to fight fire with fire and the PAIGC leaders are pretty subtle at times," Bacar remarked as we marched through a large grove a short distance from the tabanca.

The visit to the tabanca was the first occasion I had to refill my water bottle that day. The villagers provided fresh water, as much as we liked, and although the troops could drink it as it came, mine had to be filtered and sterilised with chemicals, an agonising wait of another 30 minutes before I could ease a raging thirst which had been with me since early morning. I had finished my water supply long before noon. By the time we reached the village I could easily have drunk four cansful, but due to the time factor I was limited to one, and a refill for the night.

The filtering process was a complicated procedure in a country where intestinal infections and parasites are endemic. First the water was filtered into the can through a special flexible rubber pipe. This process--drop by drop--took 15 minutes to fill a pint flask. The amount of sediment taken from the water was astonishing. The pipe filtering my water led to a tiny filtration unit near the base which contained a special white porous paper. When removed, the paper was brown with slime which would normally only have been detectable with the help of a microscope.

Five tablets were then dropped into the can and had to be left for 20 minutes to dissolve to take the required purifying action. These

pills killed any bacteria and microbes which remained and which, if imbibed, could cause such old Africa delights as dysentery, blackwater fever, and even infectious hepatitis which I had picked up in Dahomey on the west coast on one occasion some years ago after drinking a glass of untreated water.

We set our ambush for the night shortly after leaving the tabanca. Bacar marched us due south along a well-used track for about an hour. He then abruptly left the path and we doubled back towards the village we had just left, keeping well in the cover of the bush. If the enemy were to visit the settlement that night we would have them.

We could hear the village in the distance as we approached again. They, too, were preparing to settle in for the night. There was considerable music, laughter, and conversation heralding the dark hours. Someone banged a gong in the distance, another called on a bugle-like instrument which I had seen earlier and which was fashioned from the horn of an antelope--a single discordant note which carried far into the night. I was to hear it afterwards, in Bissau. It was an unforgettable sound. There was more noise somewhere to the left of us. In the far distance the women of another tabanca were singing.

Bacar spread out his men carefully a short distance off the track. We were about half a mile from the village. The men lay on a small rise equidistant from each other. The riflemen were spaced between others carrying heavier weapons. Behind them were the rocket carriers and bazookas. At the two extremities were machine gunners, the muzzles of their weapons trained in a wide arc so as to cover both points of approach. Behind the entire group were placed the mortars in a clearing just beyond some low trees over which they would fire if the need arose. The men worked out the elevation of the mortars while Bacar directed elsewhere.

It was an excellent ambush site, and to cover the final eventuality, the Fula officer sent two men into the jungle behind us to cover the rear. The men disappeared into the bush where they would lie for the rest of the night. We would be in position for more than 12 hours, Jimenez had explained to me earlier. There would be no smoking or talking.

It was a long wait. The ants and mosquitoes, some as big as house flies, were resolute and fierce in their purpose. We lay on the bare



Jungle patrol in Portuguese Guinea.



Portuguese army ambush.

ground and had no netting with which to ease the onslaught. No one thought of spiders or snakes. They were there, to be sure, but it's different when one is with a large group of men; it's usually the other man who will get bitten and not you. Tomaz helped a little earlier in the evening, before night had set in properly, by producing his magic bottle of scotch. It hardly benefited my thirst. We drank some that night and had the rest for breakfast, before dawn. It was a good substitute for coffee under the circumstances, but I would have preferred water.

The men slept in groups, first the one lot, then another, leaving about three-quarters of the patrol awake at any one time. The officers moved silently between their charges. Heaven help him who snored and I gathered it would be more than a man's life was worth to be caught sleeping on the job. Bacar had his own brand of punishment for this offence and it was ruthless.

It was difficult to stay awake and alert even though we had the moon for company for more than half the night. Occasionally there would be a rustle in the night to our left or to the right and the men would start. There were few other distractions. All weapons were already cocked; the metallic click of a rifle's bolt being brought back into firing position can be heard over hundreds of yards by a trained ear in the quiet jungle. Bacar had taught his men to take no chances.

Shortly before midnight we heard a muffled explosion somewhere far away to the south. It came as a dull thump in the night. Jimenez looked up but said nothing. I knew what was going through his mind. Someone had probably put his foot on a mine somewhere in the jungle. Friend or enemy?

Bacar's circuitous safari had followed a set pattern. The entire route had been detailed between him and the colonel before we left. They had taken some time to settle the route, the colonel wanting the men to go in one direction and Bacar in another for reasons which must have made sound tactical sense, for he won the day. The course had to be set, prior to leaving, for two reasons. The first was to advise the air force so the men would not be bombed while out in the bush. Second came the problem of routes already mined by the Portuguese; there had been quite a few tracks in some of the remoter areas booby-trapped by government forces. Two could play at that game, Bacar had reasoned when he put me into the picture. To avoid injury to the civilian population, tribal leaders were told to keep their people within the bounds of the territory they normally

frequented. Beyond these limits their safety could not be guaranteed. The Portuguese, too, had to observe these limitations and observe them carefully. Shortly before I arrived at Tite a soldier had his leg blown off trying to return to camp along a route which had been mined by Colonel Lopes' men. It was a vicious cycle.

We left our positions in the jungle at the first hint of false dawn. The glow crept slowly over our position like the effulgent curtain raised over the ghost scene in Hamlet--dull, diffused, and quite eerie. One moment Africa is jet black. Then, within minutes, there are trees visible 100 yards away, vaguely discernable, as if through a London smog. The men started moving before the birds had stirred and like phantoms they slipped silently onto the track. We were on our way again.

It came as something of a surprise to us all to learn a little later that morning that a PAIGC unit had set up an ambush only half a mile from us on the same track. Bacar had said nothing to me immediately, nor had Jimenez. Shortly after we left our ambush site the trackers had found traces of enemy occupation ten minutes march from where we had been lying.

The unit had been large--two bi-groups--about 60 men in all, the scouts had estimated. Had contact been made it would have been bloody and vicious. Like Bacar's, it had been an excellent position from which to make an attack. The luck of the draw would have it that we stopped where we did for the night. Or perhaps it was on the PAIGC that the Lady smiled that night, for these were the same PAIGC guerrillas that ambushed Bacar exactly seven days later.

IX

PAIGC--THE GUERRILLA ORGANISATION

Guerrilla warfare has one major advantage in this nuclear age. If employed as an instrument of foreign aggression, it constitutes an "ambiguous threat" by confusing the legal, political and even military bases for an effective international response.

"Guerrillas in the 1960s":

Peter Paret and John W. Shy

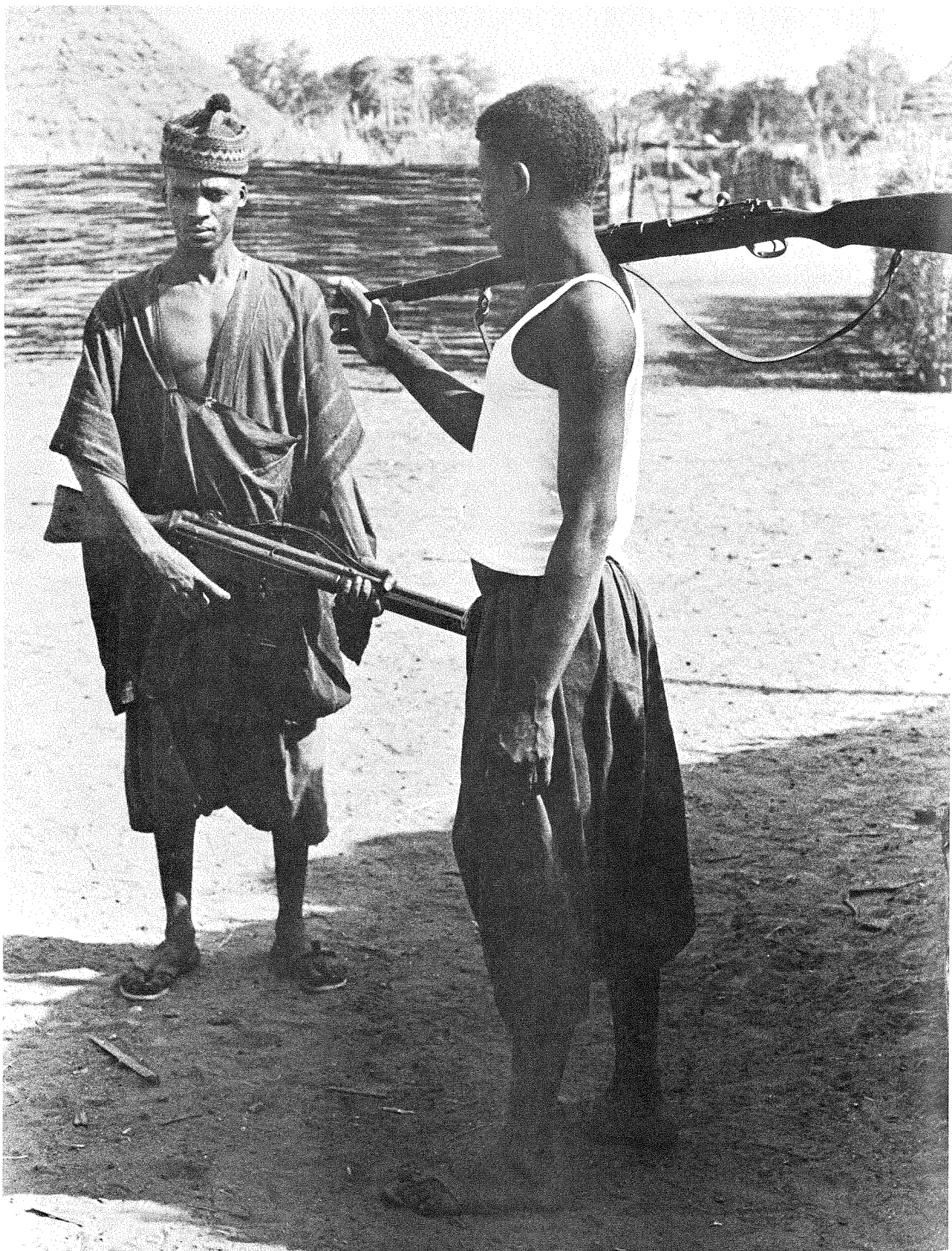
PAIGC guerrilla forces are split between three distinct and identifiable operational zones or regions--the North, South, and East.

At present Mamadou Djiassi heads the forces in the Northern zone. His colleague of long standing, Osvaldo Maximo Viera, is in charge of the East, while one of the most illustrious figures to emerge from the continuing battle, Joao Bernadino Viera--also known among his own men and the Portuguese as O Nino or General Nino--is active in the South, where the fighting is fiercest.

General Nino has been in action against the Portuguese since the beginning and he is still in his early thirties. The Portuguese claim he was once a stretcher bearer in their army. His tactics and deployment have marked him as a brilliant strategist in the traditional guerrilla mold of Guevara and Orde Wingate. He is known for his aggressive penetration which incorporates the methods of Mao and Guevara. Nino does not favour tactical retreat in the face of heavy enemy retaliation. As a leader he is as ruthless as he is dynamic. He has executed men on the spot for not obeying commands or for sleeping on sentry duty.

Nino was one of the first of the young revolutionaries who answered the call of the PAIGC; he was sent, together with six others, including his blood-relation, Osvaldo, to Communist China for training in insurgency warfare. Nino and his colleagues spent eight months at the Nanking Military Academy in 1961.

Cabral, in one of his interviews, told an interesting anecdote



Civilian Fula volunteers (pro-Portuguese) at a village in the arid east.

about Nino. Shortly after returning to Portuguese Guinea, this short, well-built, pitch-black fighter with the deceptively young face was seized by the Portuguese. At the time, Cabral explained, Nino was one of the agents of the mobilisation organisation and Party chief in the Cobucare zone which extends southwards from Tite and Bolama to Catio. A disaffected member of Cabral's organisation had denounced him.

Nino was questioned at length about his activities, but the Portuguese could not believe that so young a man could be one of the hard core rebels. In any event, it was decided to send him to Bissau and let PIDE (Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado), the notorious Portuguese secret police, deal with him. That same evening Nino passed a message through a sympathiser in the local police barracks that he was being held and that he was about to be sent to Bissau. Within hours a group of insurgents broke into the police station and released him. Cabral claimed he still had the padlock of the jail where Nino was kept.

Thirty-two-year-old Osvaldo Viera was also trained by the communists, but whereas his namesake is probably one of the most active guerrilla leaders on the continent, the East has been relatively quiet over the past few years. Osvaldo, formerly the Northern commander, was another of the original few who rallied around Cabral from the start. His job has been partially stymied by the Fula tribesmen who make up the bulk of the inhabitants of the region where he operates. The Fula prefer Portuguese control to that of the PAIGC, partly because of the extreme left-wing nature of the PAIGC and partly because of the movement's close ties to Sékou Touré's Guinea. One of the first measures taken by Touré on gaining independence in 1958 was to relegate tribal leaders to positions of secondary importance and answerable to the Party. The Fulas, with a long tradition of tribal and family hierarchies, realised they would be the first to suffer if the PAIGC came to power. Most of the Portuguese-oriented armed civilian militia units are Fula and are to be found in Osvaldo's area.

Each of the three military regions or fronts is subdivided into sectors, controlled by a sector leader who is answerable to the regional commander personally. From time to time the regional and sector commanders meet with the guerrilla leaders to discuss problems, past mistakes, and future tactics. Prior to the entry of General Spínola into the fray, such meetings were held within the Portuguese enclave. More recently the supreme Command has been forced southwards into "neutral" territory whenever a discussion is scheduled. Apart from Conakry, Portuguese intelligence has

pinpointed Boke and Kandiafara as other PAIGC parleying points.

Although sector leaders are on their own militarily, they are obliged to liaise closely with political commissars attached to their commands. The presence of these men, ominous to those accustomed to the military traditions of another era, should be seen as a sort of preventive therapy against sclerosis of the Party system. The commissars' duty is to guard against any wavering of the strict party line and to keep individuals and personality cults in check. The emphasis is on an army subservient to the Party. The commissars are also there, it has been stated, to prevent anything like Algeria's Wilayism, which caused so much internal dissension among the Arab liberationists during their bitter campaign against the French. Commanders are, therefore, responsible for troops and operations and not territory, although political and administrative control of infiltrated zones remains in the hands of regional or zonal leaders such as the Vieras or Mamadou Djiassi.

For the purpose of operations, sectors are again divided into groups of guerrilla infantry, also known as bi-groups. These are the men who do the actual fighting. About 30-men strong, each bi-group usually has its own political commissar in attendance. These small units are fully self-contained when operational. The men are mostly armed with Kalashnikovs and a few heavier weapons, bazookas, machine guns, and RPG rocket carriers for support. There is not all that much difference between a bi-group's fire-power and that of the average patrol put out by the Portuguese.

The political organisation of the PAIGC is a little less complicated. The Party is headquartered in Conakry, with Luiz Cabral replacing his brother at the top of the pyramid with the title of Secretary General. Below him ranges a 20-man elected body known as the Political Secretariat. From these members a Council of War of seven members is elected. Among those at present in office is the Secretary General, the three military regional commanders, and two others. In their hands lie the full scope and ramifications of the guerrilla struggle.

Acting in conjunction with the Political Secretariat is the Central Committee which is composed of 65 members. This in turn is subdivided into five departments or ministries:

Commission of Control, whose principal task is to watch, like an Ombudsman, the work done by every facet of the Party machine.

Commission of Security, otherwise known as PAIGC's own

KGB/GRU. Most of its members have been trained by East Europeans.

Commission of Foreign Relations, responsible inter alia for propaganda, and (according to Portuguese sources) not adverse to a little espionage on occasion.

Commission for National Reconstruction, the smallest of the five departments, waiting hopefully for the day that Lisbon will withdraw its troops; and finally, the

Commission of Organisation and Orientation, responsible for the day-to-day problems within the Party, in the broadest sense.

Beyond the borders of the Portuguese enclave, the PAIGC operates a number of institutions which serve the nationalists. In Conakry, the movement runs a secondary school for Portuguese Guineans. According to an American authority on the war, Professor William Zartman, both the University of Dakar in Senghor's Senegal and the "Workers' University" in Conakry are open to them. Beyond Africa, unknown members of the PAIGC have received military and other training in communist states, including China; the Party shows little interest or inclination in developing comparable opportunities in western countries, although admittedly little has been offered.

Cabral often complained of the "lack of interest" in his war among the more prominent western nations. He told of sending a young university graduate, Miss Maria Luz de Andrade, to London and Paris for aid. In both capitals the officials she met were evasive. When she asked the British Red Cross for medical assistance, she was referred to the Portuguese Red Cross in Lisbon. Cabral experienced similar detachment when he visited London in 1960 under the assumed name of Abel Djassi. He canvassed members of the British Labour Party for assistance in his struggle, but got none. It was the same when he returned in 1962, this time under his own name. Cabral afterwards told Basil Davidson "Why should we be surprised? After all, Portugal is Britain's ally!" Probably Cabral's most successful visit to Britain came in October/November, 1971. Once again, using his own name and traveling in an official capacity, Cabral appeared on television, addressed public meetings, and had several appreciative articles written about him in the national press. He collected several thousand pounds for his movement from an increasingly sympathetic British public.

Another venture undertaken by the PAIGC was the establishment in the middle-sixties of an economic bartering system within Portuguese

Guinea known as "People's Shops." The system which the PAIGC operates is worked on the lines of buying rice and other crops at prices slightly higher than those offered by the Portuguese, or bartering goods for such everyday items as soap, sugar, salt, cloth, or tobacco. This way, the guerrillas maintain, Lisbon is being deprived of additional revenue. The crops are then removed across the border into the Republic of Guinea.

In theory, the principle is sound, but of late the PAIGC system has made little headway for two reasons. The first is the intensification of the war, which makes even the movement of troops carrying only their equipment difficult, and the transportation of sacks of rice or grain even more so. Although produce is still bought from the peasants where it can be found, it is used mostly for consumption and storage as supply lines beyond the border become increasingly tenuous.

The second factor helping to break down the system of barter is the steadily deteriorating economic situation in Touré's Guinea, which in turn affects the buying power of the guerrillas, as many have to use the Guinea franc, which is useless abroad. Officially the exchange rate for the Guinea franc--it is not linked to the Bank of France--is about 600 to the pound sterling (about \$2.50).

Then there is the problem of consignments of crops which disappear between the border and Conakry. With production at an all-time low in Toure's country, government troops have, on occasion, not been adverse to commandeering stores for their own use if they think they can get away with it. As guests in a foreign country, there has been little the PAIGC leaders can do about it.

Medical services have always been a problem for the guerrilla army. Initially the troops were supplied with the most primitive equipment imaginable. Rags and crushed palm fronds were used for battle dressings. Drugs were a rare luxury. Russia stepped in early on in the war and trained more than 100 nurses in Soviet hospitals. Czechoslovakia has provided much material and on-the-spot field training. Today casualties that come out of the war are hospitalized at any of a dozen clinics near the border of the enclave. There are larger military hospitals at Ziguinchor, Dakar, and Conakry which the PAIGC wounded may also use through the cooperation of the Senegalese and Guinean governments. Latest reports indicate that the PAIGC has sent a young Portuguese doctor, who deserted to the insurgents, for surgical training in France.

Of all the liberation organisations in Africa, the PAIGC also takes the lead in the field of propaganda. Although hortative propaganda rarely surfaces outside West Africa, I was shown examples of PAIGC productions in Lisbon. There was an illustrated monthly bulletin entitled "Libertação Unidade e Luta," published in Portuguese and circulated through the PAIGC. There was also a primary reader in Portuguese, "Caderno Escolar," which, I gather, had been published in Peking, and other simple publications with a good presentation and a simple message: revolution had come to stay. Tracts are also regularly put out by the PAIGC's own press in Conakry. It was Mao's dictum that propaganda materials are important in the waging of any struggle: "Every large guerrilla unit should have a printing press and mimeograph stone. They must also have paper on which to print propaganda leaflets and notices," Mao wrote in the thirties.

Complementary to the publications, Radio Libertação broadcasts daily in Portuguese to the war zones in the north. The site of the station is supposed to be secret, but it has already broadcast from Boke, Kandiafara, and Koundara, issuing a steady stream of cryptic coded messages apart from the usual anti-Portuguese diatribes.

* * * * *

"It so happens that in our country the Portuguese colonialist did not appropriate the land; he allowed us to cultivate the land; he did not create agricultural companies of the European type, like he did for instance in Angola; he did not create colonatos¹ as he did in Angola, where he displaced masses of Africans in order to settle Europeans.

"We maintained a basic structure under colonialism; the land remained cooperative property of the village, of the community. This is a very important characteristic of our peasant, who was not directly exploited by the coloniser, but was exploited through trade, through the differences between the prices and the real value of the products."

Thus spoke Amilcar Cabral to a correspondent of the Cuban revolutionary magazine, Tricontinental, during the Khartoum Conference of Solidarity with the Freedom Fighters in the Portuguese Colonies and Southern Africa.

¹Settler communities.

Cabral made it clear that his struggle was different from similar guerrilla wars at present being waged in Africa. There was no inflexible settler community to speak of; no nationalistic chauvinism among a white community which had found a new identity in Africa and was determined to hold on to it to the exclusion of all else; and no real exploitation of the black masses, as is often contended by other PAIGC spokesmen when presenting their case abroad.

Portuguese Guinea, therefore, is in a class of its own. The nature of the guerrilla conflict and the organisation conducting that struggle bears little comparison, for instance, with Frelimo or the MPLA.

Cabral as a person epitomised the nature of his movement. A small, ascetic-looking man with a burnished complexion, he was in his early fifties when I met him. He had the piercing eyes that characterise so many of the more prominent African leaders. His bold chin was set off by a thin ring of salt-and-pepper beard. Even in camouflage uniform, which he donned when he occasionally crossed the border and ventured into enemy territory, his dress was neat. He reflected the bearing of a senior staff officer, although in reality his military training had been fragmentary.

When I met him for the first time in Addis Ababa during the 1971 summit of African Heads of State, he was strolling casually through the press centre prior to the start of the third day's session. His grey suit of Continental cut contrasted readily with the more conservative styles of a few of the delegates around him and the plainclothed Ethiopian security officer who followed him around the building. This man was there more for Cabral's own safety, I gathered later, than for any insurrection he may have contemplated while in Selassie's capital.

His manner was informal when I stepped forward and introduced myself. Only a few months before, I had been with Bacar in the jungles of Guinea searching for Cabral's men. I told him so and he was genuinely interested. He translated what I had said for the benefit of one of his aides who stood close by. Cabral spoke fluent Portuguese and fair English.

"We must talk," he said. "There is obviously much that we could tell each other." Not for a moment did the easy affable smile leave his lips. After ten minutes he excused himself in order to enter the debating chamber in Africa Hall.

The immediate impression he made was of a personality exuding

forcefulness and authority, blended with an undeniable old world charm that one so rarely sees among the European or American dignitaries one meets these days. An American would have described him as a "nice guy." In the words of a Scandinavian colleague who was with me at the time, Amilcar Cabral was very much of a "complete individual-- unquestionably a leader of men."

"If he and the Portuguese could come to terms," the journalist added later, "Cabral could easily lead his nation to maturity and probably make a success of it." I could only agree. It all boiled down to ideals--Cabral too far to the left and the Portuguese way out on the right, and neither willing to compromise.

Amilcar Lopes Cabral was born in 1921 on the Cape Verde Islands and educated at Bafata, one of the larger centres of the enclave, well into the interior. His parents were Cape Verdians of mixed blood, which is one of the reasons why his complexion was tawny rather than the jet black of so many of his fellow Party members.

From the start young Amilcar distinguished himself at school. He was always at or near the top of his class. This prompted the local authorities to take more than a passing interest in this brilliant young mestiço who showed promise in just about everything he did at Bafata's Gileanas school. Assimilado status followed as a matter of course. Cabral became one of 11 Assimilados in the entire country.

Shortly after the end of the last war, Cabral was awarded a scholarship to the Instituto Superior de Agronomia, a technical university in Lisbon where he graduated in 1950 with honours as an agronomist, or what the Portuguese call an "Agricultural Engineer." Political awareness must have come early, for already in 1948 Cabral, the student, was exchanging views at the subsequently-banned Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio with such men as Agostinho Neto, at present head of the Angolan Liberation movement, and Mario Pinto de Andrade, who was to become a poet of renown after he had studied in Frankfurt and Paris and who, according to Portuguese sources, was subsequently recruited by the Portuguese (underground) and French communist parties. Shortly after returning to West Africa the young agronomist took his first positive step in the realm of politics by forming an African political movement known as MING--the Movimento para a Independência Nacional da Guiné Portuguesa.

For a few years following his return to the enclave (1950-1954), Cabral was employed by the Government Agronomy Office at Bissau. His

work during this period entailed traveling throughout Portuguese Guinea making contact with the inhabitants at all levels of society, black and white. Cabral's approach was sympathetic from the start. Local peasants confided in him; the more outspoken demanded that he help them right their wrongs, which at the hands of the Portuguese authorities of that period were many.

Carefully he built up a list of reliable supporters. The more militant among them were told to bide their time. They were assured that forces were in the making to bring power to the black man. The pattern was not unlike that followed by many of the young black political aspirants in the Anglo-Saxon West African colonies of the time.

Cabral left his mark during this period. Many still remember him and, in spite of the war, talk highly of this energetic young official who would do as much work in a day as most Portuguese managed in three. One of the agricultural reports drawn up by Cabral at the time, an Agricultural Census of Guinea, recommending certain measures which should be taken to improve conditions in the interior, was adopted by the governor and is still in force. But his revolutionary talk did not go unnoticed. Gradually reports filtered through to Bissau that the young Cabral was up to something. However, he was well liked and invariably the rumours were shelved because it was believed Cabral was an ambitious, hardworking fellow who was eager to make his way to the top and this was his way of doing it. The idea of political maturity among the indigenes was so remote at that stage, even in more developed states such as Kenya and the Gold Coast (Ghana), as to make revolution unthinkable in most official African circles. But in late 1953 matters came to a head and Cabral was given the choice of ending his activities or leaving the country. Cabral chose the latter course and returned to Lisbon.

A competent man in Portugal is rarely without work for long and he was soon offered several positions in Angola. There in 1954 he joined his old political soul-mate, Agostinho Neto. Two years later he became a founder member of the MPLA, the Angola guerrilla movement.

Cabral meanwhile kept close ties with Bissau. He had established the embryo of a revolutionary movement and obviously it was important to keep it active. The formation of the MPLA was the impetus he needed to set a train of events in his own country moving, and in September the same year, Cabral again took the lead and formed the Central Committee of the PAIGC. Six men were present at that first

clandestine meeting in Bissau. Cabral was one of them. He spent the next three years establishing the political structure which eventually brought the movement to fruition.

On the evening of September 19 Cabral, on a brief visit home, met with his fellow leaders and declared for total war against the Portuguese "by whatever means possible." He then bade farewell to his family and crossed the border into the Republic of Guinea, where President Sékou Touré, himself barely independent of French rule, had offered him a base from which to operate against the Portuguese. From there onwards the PAIGC went underground. The movement had already been assured help from another quarter. During his period of self-imposed exile, Cabral had visited Prague and Moscow and had been promised unlimited military and material aid should he be able to get the movement firmly established.

Cabral and his followers started their political training immediately. The instructors in his school for guerrilla politics were Cabral himself and some of his chief aides, including Mario Pinto de Andrade. PAIGC headquarters also published a public document of intent containing seven articles which detailed future plans for the movement. These were:

1. Immediate and total independence for Guiné-Bissau (as it is referred to in PAIGC publications and communiques) and the Cape Verde Islands.
2. Political unity between Guiné-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands.
3. Unity of the people of the two segments of the new state.
4. Unity between the black people of Africa and other liberation organisations in Africa.
5. The establishment of a democratic government which would follow anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist tenets.
6. Total economic independence from Portugal and all other states, the reorganisation of the economy of Guiné-Bissau, and increased production throughout.
7. Justice and progress for everyone.

The early years were difficult. Men and women had to be trained in the complex art of guerrilla warfare and administration and, as Portuguese Guinea could only boast 14 university graduates in 1960,

much of the human material Cabral and his lieutenants were dealing with had to be taught from scratch. Many had to learn to read and write. A steady stream of recruits sped southwards to Conakry to undergo a period of training--usually between one and three months. All came under Cabral's personal guidance.

During this period Cabral traveled extensively. Apart from visiting communist-bloc states, he attended a variety of meetings in African capitals and abroad. It was during this period that he first visited Britain.

He also spent some years in exile in Rabat, Morocco, with his white wife, who is an acknowledged communist, and their four children. It is interesting that all three leaders of revolutionary movements opposing Portugal have been married to white women, the late Eduardo Mondlane of Frelimo (Moçambique) and Neto of MPLA (Angola) included.

Cabral explained his reasons for bringing the peasant into the war: "One of our fundamental principles is that the fight must be based on massive support in the countryside. We organised both men and women, though at the time we did not call the women to the guerrilla bases." Women, Cabral declared at the beginning, would play a central role in both the political and military echelons of the guerrilla movement. For this reason there are more women taking an active part within the PAIGC than any other guerrilla organisation in Africa. Some have been included in military operations.

Much of Cabral's own training during this period came from the Russians. The Soviet Ambassador in Conakry at the time, Daniel Semonovitch Solod, an acknowledged authority on guerrilla warfare and infiltration, was his mentor. Both Cabral and Andrade are known to have had close contact with this man and other members of his diplomatic staff. Cabral also acknowledged that 1961 was the year he first became acquainted with the works of Mao. Looking at the struggle and tactics of the PAIGC today, the influence of this Chinese leader has penetrated to all levels of the movement, from the leaders downwards.

Andrade meanwhile also had a hand in forming a multi-national organisation known as FRAIN (The Front of Revolutionary Africans for National Independence of Portuguese Dependencies). This body, which had close links with similar bodies in Angola and Moçambique, was the forerunner of the present organisation which liaises between

the three Luso-tropical provinces and is known as CONCP (Conference of National Organisations of Portuguese Colonies) and which is recognised by the Organisation of African Unity.

The first real setback experienced by the Guinea liberation movement came in March, 1962, when Rafael Barbosa, the president, was arrested. A party of PAIGC officials were holding a secret meeting in Bissau when the house was raided by PIDE. Two other regional leaders, Mamadou Touré, political secretary of PAIGC's Bissau zone and a member of the Central Committee, and Albino Sampa, were also taken. Barbosa, the biggest Portuguese catch to date, was held until 1969, when he was released from detention. It has since been accepted that he has defected to the Portuguese.

Arrests had been made before, but nothing as significant as this. In 1961, 21 members of the Party were arrested, including two other leaders, Fernando Fortes and a man known as Epifanio. The trial which followed, the PAIGC feels, did much to boost publicity for the movement and create an awareness among the peasants that something drastic was afoot among the indigenes.

Cabral detailed this early period in the speech he made at Khartoum (Sudan):

"Telling the people that the land belongs to those who toil on it was not sufficient to mobilise them, because we have more than enough land; there is all the land we need. We had to find appropriate formulas to mobilise our peasants, instead of utilising terms that our people couldn't yet understand. We could never mobilise our people merely on the basis of the struggle against colonialism. That produces nothing; to speak of the fight against imperialism is not convincing enough. In its place we use a direct language that all can understand.

"Why are we going to fight? What are you? What is your father? What has happened to your father until now? What is happening? What is the situation? Did you pay the tax? Did your father pay the tax? What have you seen from that tax? How much do you get from your peanuts [the biggest crop product]? Have you thought about what you will earn with your peanuts? How much sweat has it cost your family? Which of you were prisoners? Was it you who was a prisoner?

"These were the mobilising factors. You are going to work in road-building. Who gives you the tools? You bring the tools. Who provides the meal? You provide the meal. But--who walks in the street?

Who has a car? And your daughter who was raped by that white so-and-so. Do you find that all right?

"To interest certain elements we even used some concrete cases the people knew about--individuals who had been molested by Portuguese colonialism but didn't realise that Portuguese colonialism was at fault. In our new mobilisation we avoided all over-generalisations and pat phrases. We went into detail and had our people who were preparing for this kind of work repeat what they were going to say many times. That is an aspect which we considered of great importance, in our specific case, because we started from the concrete reality of our people.

"We tried to avoid having the peasants suppose that we were outsiders come to teach them how to do things; we put ourselves in the position of people who come to learn with the peasant, and in the end the peasant was discovering for himself why things had gone so badly for him. He came to understand that there exists a tremendous amount of exploitation and that he is the one who pays everything, even the profits of the people living in the city. Experience shows us it is necessary that each people find its own formula to mobilise for the struggle. The experience that we had with our peasants allows us to state that to integrate the peasant masses into the struggle one must have a great deal of patience. It is necessary under our conditions that the countryside be mobilised initially by people capable of integrating themselves into the peasant milieu, and that starting from the first mobilisations, the peasants organise themselves and mobilise the rest. We can affirm that our peasant is not in any way a primary revolutionary element. The peasant is the principal physical force of our struggle, but he is not, he was not--above all in that moment--the principal revolutionary force.

"We found the principal revolutionary force in the urban milieu, as much among the petty bourgeois class which was conscious of the foreign domination in our country as among the salaried workers of the ports, the ships, the repair shops, etc. It was these who after many difficulties brought the peasant to consider himself part of the revolution.

"On the other hand, we always gave greater importance to the most exploited strata, both in the countryside and in the cities. We proceeded to a deep analysis of the social structure of our people in order to know both how to place the strata in relation to the phenomenon of struggle and how to act with each of them."

The real war against the Portuguese started slowly. Cabral tried sabotaging isolated targets in 1961 and early 1962, but the Portuguese reacted strongly, arresting suspects and placing certain areas of the enclave under stringent security control.

There were also a few setbacks. There was some resentment among many of the African peasant leaders. The chiefs, traditionally allied to the Portuguese, were wary of this new brand of politics which they were aware was sweeping the continent. In some countries it had led to violence.

Initially Cabral concentrated on the more primitive tribes--the populous Balantas, the Beafadas, and the Mandingos. The latter were also Islamic but were without the deep-rooted tribal traditions or the history of Joao Bacar's Fula people.

After two years of preparation, the first concentrated PAIGC attacks were launched. These were at isolated outposts in the north of the country, though reports have it that a rival liberation organisation, FLING, also had a hand in these strikes. In January 1963, hostility began in earnest with concerted attacks on Tite, Buba, Fulacunda, and other centres to the south. The struggle spread rapidly. In spite of being forewarned, the Portuguese had not taken advantage of the breathing space which allowed them to consolidate their position. They spread their forces along the southern border with the Republic of Guinea, expecting the attack to come in the form of a land-borne invasion as had been the case in Angola two years previously. Instead, Cabral's commandos, having already infiltrated the enclave, hit 50 miles to the north, well into the hinterland. Within a year the Portuguese were on the defensive and, within two, virtually contained within their fortified towns, settlements, and camps. It was not long before PAIGC ruled the roost throughout the rest of the country.

February 1964 saw the first big PAIGC congress held on occupied soil in the south. The PAIGC regards this as the critical period of the struggle, with the leaders getting together and reviewing their successes and mistakes. It was here, too, that a number of civilian chiefs were relieved of their authority and their regions taken into the control of the Party. In so doing they created blood enemies of the Fulas and all other chiefdoms still not directly under their control.

At the conference, too, zones and regions were created, each with Party committees. More important, Cabral decided that the time had come for the establishment of a regular army which was to be known as FARP (Forças Armadas Revolucionarias da População). At that

stage he claimed he had more than 18,000 men under arms. A thousand irregular volunteers were chosen for the new military units. These were gradually enlarged to the three brigades operating in Portuguese Guinea today. The guerrilla structure, therefore, follows the three-tiered Maoist principle with an elite hard core, locally based irregular guerrillas, and a militia as the auxiliaries. The People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARP) is the regular guerrilla army whose bi-groups are moved wherever necessary and follow classical hit-and-run surprise attacks, especially on armed camps, roads, and rivers. Tabanca-based part-time guerrillas help in manpower, food, and supplies, and supply intelligence.

* * * * *

During his visits to the United States and Britain, Amilcar Cabral was adamant that he was a neutral in cold-war politics in the traditional Afro-Asian mold. Like his colleague-in-arms, Agostinho Neto of the Angolan MPLA, he chided reporters for repeatedly asking him the question. Neto, it is interesting to note, receives the bulk of his military hardware from Peking.

But other facts which have since come to light put a rather different complexion on Cabral's assertions.

In an interview given to the Chilean publication El Siglo on December 5, 1970, Cabral declared inter alia that the technical leadership of the PAIGC came from the socialist states. Cabral admitted that his movement was not Marxist by African standards. "There are communists in our movement because our communists are nationalists," he said.

Cabral also confirmed "absolute solidarity" with the Russian Communist Party, its leadership and policy. "We think Lenin a great man and the October Revolution the greatest occasion in history. We are for the unity of all anti-imperialist forces," Cabral proclaimed. He said that it was a great pity that there were differences of opinion in the anti-imperialist front. Concluding his interview, Cabral said that the PAIGC was a firm ally of the U. S. S. R. and the Socialist World.

The aid the PAIGC receives from abroad is almost entirely restricted to that from behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains. From Russia, East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia it receives the bulk of its arms and ammunition. A Portuguese communique which was issued

at the end of 1970 stated that during the year more than 40 tons of armaments and munitions had been taken from the guerrillas. Of this, the statement read, more than 90 percent was of Soviet origin. Many of the instructors training PAIGC personnel are also Russians, as are most of the technical, logistical, radio, and electronics specialists seconded to the PAIGC. I saw a Russian team myself in Koundara as long ago as 1965 operating the radio relay station which served the Eastern war zone. The latest development in this direction is the presence of a squad of Russian frogmen in Conakry. Reports have it that they are to train PAIGC frogmen in underwater demolition and attack. The ragged unguarded shoreline of Portuguese Guinea is conducive to this kind of warfare.

Other aid received by the PAIGC includes Cuban helicopter pilots who are used within the Republic of Guinea to ferry stores and supplies to the front regions. China is also represented. A large group of Chinese specialists visited the forward regions in 1971.

Clearly, the organisation of the PAIGC both without and within is thorough and well-coordinated. The first indications that something could be wrong came from no less a person than the President of PAIGC, Rafael Barbosa, in 1969. Shortly after he had been released by the authorities, Barbosa passed around a document which suggested that the movement should concentrate on Portuguese Guinea alone and exclude the ten offshore Cape Verde Islands. Barbosa argued that the movement would gain more international support by doing this. The islands, he said, had a strategic significance which extended beyond the limits of a purely colonial type African guerrilla war. By no longer claiming the islands within the scope of the struggle, he said, some nations--particularly those in the west who were covertly assisting the MPLA and Frelimo--might be more inclined to offer aid. Cabral rejected the offer out of hand and in so doing terminated Barbosa's office of President of the Party.

Further problems surfaced early in 1970. Under the direction of Osvaldo Viera, regional commander in the North, there were several arrests of members of the Party on the charge that they had advocated that the PAIGC give up the fight and try to come to a peaceful settlement with Lisbon. Some of the men, including Laisec Eduardo Pinto, formerly responsible for security in Ziguinchor and Koundara, are known to have been executed on Cabral's orders. It is not yet known what has happened to the others.

TEIXEIRO PINTO: PATTERN FOR PROGRESS

If you concentrate exclusively on victory with no thought for the after effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war. This is a lesson supported by abundant experience. The risks become greater still in any war that is waged by a coalition, for in such a case too complete a victory inevitably complicates the problem of making a just and wise peace settlement. Where there is no longer the counter-balance of an opposing force to control the appetites of the victors, there is no check on the conflict of views and interests between the parties to the alliance. The divergence is then apt to become so acute as to turn the comradeship of common danger into the hostility of mutual dissatisfaction--so that the ally in one war becomes the enemy of the next.

Sir Basil Liddell Hart:
his famous 1941 prediction

The rewards of guerrilla warfare are devious. For two days I trundled about the southern jungles of Portuguese Guinea looking for Cabral's men with the Comandos Africanos and found nothing. A week later I was taken on a brief waterborne patrol in a convoy of high speed rubber boats by a party of marines based at Bigene, a few miles from Farim in the north, where the war is at its worst. We had been on the water ten minutes when a fusillade of shots staccatoed across the water in our direction from a nearby jungle thicket.

The soldiers on the boat--three of them, armed with a variety of weapons, including two light machine guns--were ready for the attackers and retaliated immediately, as did those in the two other boats following close behind us. For two or three minutes the riverside bush was scoured by a steady stream of tracer bullets. For good measure the centre boat peppered the jungle with a heavy American bazooka.

The three rubber boats had been moving fast when the first shots

sounded. Instead of slowing down and allowing for better return-fire accuracy, all three craft gunned their engines towards the opposite bank while the men on board let go with everything they had. We shot across the water at a dizzy pace, leaving a foaming three-foot crest of churned-up water in our wake. The officer in charge of the patrol, Tenente¹ Tony Verela, said that speed was his best defence. He could not afford to give the enemy an easy target by exposing the boats on the open water. I could see that it took a considerable amount of skill for the man with the bazooka in the boat nearest us to fire accurately. Not only did he have to counter the movement of his craft but also the boat's violent surging as it crossed our wash. Yet, all his shots hit the opposite bank only a few feet above the waterline.

After a few more minutes of violent maneuvers, Lieutenant Verela gave the signal to move on. We would never know whether we caused any damage or inflicted casualties on the PAIGC insurgents that fired on us. The mangrove jungle was too thick to take the chance of stopping to inspect the locality. Verdant, pristine, and luxuriant, it hung in thickets over the water. Verela did not care. Instead he checked his gun over once, tried the action a few times, inserted a new belt of ammunition which hung draped over his left shoulder, and took his place once again at the prow of the boat as we sped westwards. None of our boats or men had been hit. But it must have been close.

Verela said his men were often fired upon and that was why they traveled in groups of three, sometimes four, boats at a time. Because they always moved fast across the water, often at speeds in excess of 100 mph, they were rarely hit, although not for want of trying on the part of the guerrillas. Certainly they offered the enemy a choice target. The PAIGC rarely fired on the larger navy gunboats which patrolled the upper reaches of the Cacheu River. Bigger craft were armed with batteries of 40mm rockets which could demolish a village in minutes if necessary.

Verela was skeptical about the fire-power of the PAIGC. He had operated on the river for almost two years, and although he made contact with the enemy about once a week--serious contact in which shots were exchanged--only two of the 200 men at the marine base had been killed on the river. Land operations, he said, were different. There were more killed in occasional ambushes and by

¹ Lieutenant.



The terrain in Portuguese Guinea is rugged and uncompromising to man and machine. For this reason the war has been referred to as "Africa's Vietnam."



Portuguese marine river patrol scouts area around Bigene.

the deadly land mines. But still, he averred, the guerrillas had been given many opportunities of inflicting major damage but they rarely took the initiative. The first shots, he added, were usually accurate. That was when most of the damage was done because the guerrillas had time to aim their initial bursts. But after that their fire was erratic, almost as if they had closed their eyes and fired at random. He was of the opinion that had his assailants been of the calibre of the Vietcong, Portuguese losses would have been much more severe.

He elaborated a little. Some of the PAIGC were well-trained and would distinguish themselves in any man's army. But the majority lacked that little something extra which it took to turn a successful attack into a rout when the opportunity presented itself. Tony was the first man to admit that the Portuguese troops were at times as lackadaisical as the enemy and, for that reason, the enemy forces should have done better than they had. He was thankful they had not. He continued: "If you consider that this war has been on the go for almost 10 years and during that time the enemy has never succeeded in overrunning one of our camps, you will understand what I mean. Often some of the outlying positions are manned by only 8 or 12 men at a time. Yet they have never once succeeded in dislodging a Portuguese unit anywhere in the province.

"We have abandoned camps of our own volition--Beli, Ganture, and Cacocoa--camps we have considered too remote or impractical to maintain effectively, but when we moved it was an organised move. We were not driven out." Verela challenged the PAIGC to name a single Portuguese position that had been overrun by their guerrillas.

There are four marine bases in Portuguese Guinea like the one at Bigene. Another was at Buba on the river of the same name east of Tite. Two others were along the coast. Most of the operations were undertaken at night, with priority given to intercepting enemy pirogues which tried to cross the waterways with supplies and men for the war zones. Of the 200 men under his command, Verela said, about 60 were operational at any one time, some on the river and others on land patrols in adjacent areas. His men--all professional soldiers--were highly trained and skilled in the art of anti-insurgency warfare. He considered them the Metropolitan versions of Bacar's black commandos. Certainly, he commented optimistically, his unit had been every bit as successful as the Comandos Africanos. Over the past four months only one of his men had been wounded, compared with ten terrorists killed in confirmed body counts. There may have

been more, he said, as it was one of PAIGC's priorities to remove its wounded and dead from the scene of a battle to avoid giving the Portuguese the psychological satisfaction of knowing that they had been successful in an operation. Due to circumstances this was not always possible. During the period under review two armed guerrillas had been captured, as well as PAIGC sympathisers. These latter had been taken from canoes with PAIGC war supplies on them. All had previously been based in Senegal.

Lieutenant Verela operated a basic search-and-destroy system on river patrols. The boats went out in pairs during the late afternoon. Once darkness had blanketed the jungle, the engines were cut and the boats were either rowed upstream or floated towards the sea on the current. As the region was tidal for about 50 miles inland, the men made liberal use of the ebb and flow of the sea.

It was after dark that most of the material was taken across the water by insurgent units, though PAIGC often operated in the day. They lay in wait in their pirogues until a patrol had passed. When the coast was clear, they shot across and hoped and prayed that they were not spotted from the air.

It was Verela who told me an interesting anecdote about General Spínola which gave me a surprising insight to the man's character--authoritarian and often severe with his own men, but at times remarkably avuncular with the enemy with whom he came into personal contact. Verela was in one of two helicopters which were taking the general and his party on a tour of the southern regions. While on these flights the pilots invariably keep a circumspect eye open for guerrilla activities or concentrations.

On this particular visit they were crossing a large region of paddies just north of the Corubal River when they spotted a man running in the hollow of one of the irrigation canals. His light-coloured camouflage uniform was distinctly Czech and the man was armed with a carbine. To the surprise of the staff officers accompanying him, General Spínola ordered his helicopter to put down near the man, who by this time had taken refuge under an overhang which crossed the small waterway.

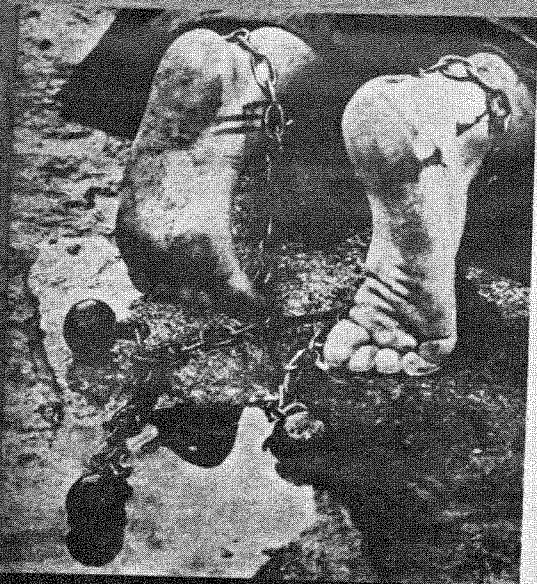
The helicopter landed. The other hovered overhead. Spínola ordered that the man be brought to him. Having been relieved of his rifle, the guerrilla was marched at gunpoint to the general who by this time had also disembarked. To everyone's amazement the

black soldier was severely upbraided by the general. He told the black man to step in line and not be a ridiculous fool; that he should try to do something constructive with his life, not destructive. Spinola addressed the guerrilla like a stern schoolmaster who had caught a young student pinching fruit. The terrified man could only nod replies to the general's questions. When he had finished, Spinola asked the soldier if he understood all he had said. The man replied in Portuguese that he had.

"Well then," said Spinola, "get yourself out of that circus dress and report to the nearest aldeamentos. You have my word you will be well received." With that Spinola climbed back into his helicopter and the party was off again. Later that day it was Verela who told Spinola that a radio message had been received from Bafata, the headquarters in the Central region, to the effect that a young rebel soldier had presented himself to a camp in the south. Like other guerrillas who defected, he was first interrogated at length and then allowed to return to a village of his choice, this time within the ambit of Portuguese authority.

Life at the marine base at Bigene was not unpleasant. The river regions were cooler than the dry torrid interior of the north and east. The broad river waters and surrounding jungles provided their own diversions, including duck hunting or fishing for marlin and shark during off-hour periods. Barely a day goes by without one of the boats bringing back something for the pot. The day after our escape I went out again with the boats, and three ducks were shot about a mile from the base, picked off on the wing with army service rifles; these men were crack shots. Occasionally they bagged a crocodile for no other purpose than to rid the region of these pests which had claimed many lives in the past, particularly among the children who swam daily in the murky waters. The Portuguese officer said he was certain some were also taken by sharks, which were fairly common so far upstream, and that these deaths were usually put down to crocs. The troops were not encouraged to swim in the river. They had excavated a large pool near the water's edge which was filled from time to time by a pump.

The officers' mess at the marine base was a house halfway between the river and the airstrip. About a dozen officers were billeted there, and the atmosphere was casual and uncomplicated by the rigours of living among their men. The walls were decorated by the latest full-colour Playboy foldouts and similar objects of interest. On the door of the mess was something I had not seen elsewhere in Portugal's



CONSIDERANDO QUE O RECONHECIMENTO DOS DIREITOS FUNDAMENTAIS DE TODOS OS MEMBROS DA FAMÍLIA HUMANA É O PRIMEIRO E O MAIS IMPORTANTE, E NECESSÁRIO, CONDICIONANTE DO DESENVOLVIMENTO DA LIBERDADE, DA JUSTIÇA E DA PAZ NO MUNDO;

CONSIDERANDO QUE O DESENVOLVIMENTO E O EXERCÍCIO DOS DIREITOS DO HOMEM DEPENDEM DE UMA SÉRIE DE CONDIÇÕES QUE INFLUENCIAM A CONSCIÊNCIA DA HUMANIDADE, E QUE O DESENVOLVIMENTO DE UM MUNDO EM QUE OS DEBIDOS HUMANOS GOZEM DE LIBERDADE DE PALAVRA E DE CRENÇA E DE LIBERDADE DE MODO E DE INTERFERÊNCIA, PRINCIPALMENTE COMO A MAIS ALTA MANIFESTAÇÃO DO HOMEM;

CONSIDERANDO QUE A INDETERMINAÇÃO DOS DIREITOS DO HOMEM DEBEM PRECEDEREM POR NORMAS JURÍDICAS, E QUE É NECESSÁRIO EXISTIR UMA ORGANIZAÇÃO DE JUSTIÇA PARA GARANTIR A MANUTENÇÃO DE UMA JUSTIÇA E REVELAÇÃO JUSTA E INDETERMINADA DA CONSCIÊNCIA;

CONSIDERANDO QUE É INDISPENSÁVEL PROMOVER O DESENVOLVIMENTO DAS RELAÇÕES AMIGÁVEIS ENTRE AS NAÇÕES;

CONSIDERANDO QUE OS PODERES DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS REAFIRMAR NA CARTA E NA SUA PRÁTICA DIREITOS FUNDAMENTAIS DO HOMEM NA ORGANIZAÇÃO E NO VALOR DA MISSÃO HUMANA, NA IGUALDADE DE DIREITOS DO HOMEM E DA MULHER, E DECIDIRAM PROMOVER O DESENVOLVIMENTO SOCIAL PARA UM MELHOR NÍVEL DE VIDA NUMA MAIOR LIBERDADE;

CONSIDERANDO QUE OS DEBIDOS MEMBROS DE COMPROMISSO À PROSECUÇÃO DA COOPERAÇÃO COM AS NAÇÕES UNIDAS, O RESPEITO E A OBSERVÂNCIA UNIVERSAL DOS DIREITOS DO HOMEM E DAS LIBERDADES FUNDAMENTAIS;

CONSIDERANDO QUE É DA MÁXIMA IMPORTÂNCIA PARA A REALIZAÇÃO DESTE FINES UMA COOPERAÇÃO ENTRE OS DEBIDOS DIREITOS;

A ASSEMBLEIA GERAL PROCLAMA A PRESENTE DECLARAÇÃO UNIVERSAL DOS DIREITOS HUMANOS COMO IDEAL COMUM A ATINGIR POR TODOS OS POVOS E TODAS AS NAÇÕES, A FIM DE QUE TODOS OS INDIVÍDUOS E TODOS OS GRUPOS DA SOCIEDADE, TENHAM CONSTANTEMENTE ESTA DECLARAÇÃO NO ESPÍRITO DE EXISTÊNCIA E EXERCÍCIO DA LIBERDADE, E PARA ASSIMILAR, MEDIANTE O RESPEITO DOS DEBIDOS E LIBERDADES, E PARA ASSIMILAR, MEDIANTE O DESENVOLVIMENTO E A SUA APLICAÇÃO UNIVERSAL E EFECTIVA, TANTO NAS INSTITUIÇÕES DOS DIFERENTES ESTADOS MEMBROS COMO NAS DAS TERRITÓRIOS COLÓCAÇÃO SOB A SUA JURISDIÇÃO.

10 DE DEZEMBRO DE 1948

declaração universal dos direitos humanos

ARTIGOS

1. Todos os seres humanos nascem livres e iguais em dignidade e em direitos. Dotados de razão e de consciência, devem agir uns para com os outros com espírito de fraternidade.

2. Toda pessoa tem direito à vida, à liberdade e à segurança pessoal.

3. Ninguém será submetido à tortura, nem a outras penas cruéis, desumanas ou degradantes.

4. Todos os indivíduos têm direito à liberdade de pensamento, de consciência e de religião.

5. Todos os indivíduos têm direito à liberdade de expressão e de opinião.

6. Todos os indivíduos têm direito à liberdade de reunião e de associação pacífica.

7. Todos os indivíduos têm direito à liberdade de movimento e de residência.

8. Todos os indivíduos têm direito à liberdade de pensamento, de consciência e de religião.

9. Todos os indivíduos têm direito à liberdade de expressão e de opinião.

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37. Todos os indivíduos têm direito à liberdade de reunião e de associação pacífica.

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Portuguese marine officer Tony Verela in his officers' quarters with poster.

African wars: a large poster laying out point for point the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, printed in Portuguese. A photo of the manacled legs of a black man adorned the top of the poster, providing somber reality to the scene as we sipped our beers on the verandah. "It helps to keep things in perspective in this often terrible struggle," said Verela earnestly.

* * * * *

We went by air from Bigene to Teixeira Pinto, one of the large new liberated zones north of Bissau. On my way to the marine base a few days before, I had passed over the region and had spotted dozens of trucks on the road linking the two centres. The vehicles traveled independently of one another and not in convoy, as was the procedure in other areas, indicating a marked degree of licence in an area that only a few years before had been a PAIGC rallying point.

We were greeted at the airport by Major Luis Inocentes, a jovial, friendly-faced career officer who had spent three years as Portuguese military attache in Salisbury, Rhodesia, during the frantic post-UDI period. His English was fluent, his forte golf, though he had been unable to play for a year as there was no fairway in Bissau. He was certain it would affect his handicap of 10.

Major Inocentes had spent 28 years of his life in Africa, first in Angola, then Moçambique and Rhodesia, and now in "this hell-hole," as he referred to Guinea. His parents were still in Lourenço Marques, while his wife and three children waited for him in Lisbon. His only connection to his southern African period of service was a huge Rhodesian Ridgeback dog which followed him around the camp. His name was Big Boy, and he had been presented to the major by the South African military attache in the rebel state.

Part of the major's schooling had been completed in the Mocambican capital. After that he had attended the University of Lisbon at about roughly the same time that Cabral and the other African guerrilla leaders were there.

The major had learnt one trait from the white Africans he had lived and worked amongst in southern Africa and that was a penchant for physical fitness. He did not smoke and he drank frugally, if only to be sociable. Although he was well into his forties, he would don a

pair of running shorts each day and jog four miles along the roads around Teixeira Pinto, always with Big Boy in attendance. Was he not scared of being attacked by guerrillas who might have infiltrated this far south? I asked. His answer was to the point. "I'm in charge of operations in this area. If any have got through I would be the first to know. Anyway," he joked, "I can also run fast." We all laughed.

Teixeira Pinto is the headquarters centre of the Cacheu zone, a region with about 11,000 inhabitants, mainly of the Manjaco tribe, a people who are traditionally orderly and passive and who had not thrown their lot in with either the Portuguese or the PAIGC. There was also a fair sprinkling of expatriate Gambians who came from Bathurst to trade in the region. Many of the locals consequently understood the Gambian lingua franca, pidgin English, and the native Creole.

For this area, the commander of the region, a stocky bald-headed veteran of the Lisbon Artillery School, Colonel Freitas Doamarel, had 2,000 men deployed in three battalions, including a commando and a marine unit. A priority project during the preceding year had been tarring the roads of the region. The target set was about 100 miles by the end of 1971, which included all the roads linking important centres and the main highway to Bissau. Of this almost two-thirds had been metalled by the time I visited the headquarters. The programme had cut down mine fatalities to a minimum. Casualties of this nature were limited to very occasional anti-personnel bombs placed in some of the remoter regions, which claimed almost as many civilians as they did Portuguese.

The other important settlements dotted the region, Bula and Pelundo, both to the east of Teixeira Pinto. Apart from these the Portuguese authorities had embarked on an ambitious programme of establishing 22 other settlements or civilian reordamentos where houses were being built by the army. These were townships completely independent of army control. The civilian population was not armed because the Manjaco inhabitants preferred not to tempt the fate of their jungle gods, which included the sun, soil, and the river. This programme had been started the year before and required the construction of 4,000 houses, of which about half had been completed and occupied.

Each structure, Major Inocentes told me, would house five or six people, adults and children. Each army unit working at the various centres managed to complete about four houses a week. They were

made of clay with split palms for roof beams, the precaution against termites. Originally the authorities had intended that thatch be used for the roofs, but this order had been countermanded by Spínola. Corrugated iron was being trucked to Teixeira Pinto in huge loads. When seen from the air, the shiny metal roofs of those houses already completed caught the glint of the sun often from as far away as 20 or 30 miles, depending on the height of flight. It seemed as if the primeval jungle was gradually giving way to a patchwork of glistening zinc pimples in every direction.

The villages were functional. Each house had four large rooms and one smaller one adjoining the main living block which would probably be used as a kitchen. Each house had its own toilet somewhere near the back, as is the custom in Africa. The reordamentos were mostly situated in areas where fresh underground water was readily available. Pumps were used to bring it to the surface. There were usually two or three of these pump stations in a central part of the village, depending on the number of people. It was ironic that of all the pumps being used in Guinea, only a handful had not come from South Africa. To add a domestic touch to the barren patches of ground between the houses, the Portuguese had planted three orange trees alongside each abode.

Portuguese troops had little social contact with the tribes people around Teixeira Pinto--mainly Manjacos, who tended to keep very much to themselves, and did not even mingle with other black ethnic groups in the area. The Manjaco women were a race apart in Guinea. Facially they resembled the Fula; in stature, they were tall, graceful, and elegant. The features of some of the younger maidens were caricatures of some mysterious dark Queen of Sheba of another millennium. Unmarried virgins walked naked to the waist, their round, firm breasts well developed even at the tender age of 12 or 13. They usually married at about this stage of life and had their first child a year or thereabouts later. Once espoused, Manjaco women were known for their fidelity, even when their men went away for long periods.

Whereas Balanta and Mandingo women were easy with their favours outside the matrimonial circle, as are the women of many tribes in Moçambique and Angola, Major Inocentes said he knew of perhaps two cases where Manjaco women were sleeping with his men. Away from home for two years at a stretch, Portuguese commanders can hardly call their troops to task when they take black mistresses. In Angola and Cabinda I found that some of the best patronised men in the camp were often senior officers. There were very few men in Portugal's

African army with whom I came into contact who did not admit to having had a sexual liaison with an African woman at some time or another. These "affairs" were often sincere and not nearly as superficial as some of the men tried to make them. Stuck away in the jungle, out of touch with civilization and its encumbrances, I have known officers to take regular women in nearby villages. The African partners are well looked after. They enjoy the protection. Obviously their fellow-villagers could hardly condone a relationship which is alien to their often primitive but upright African traditions, but a time of war is a period when favours are few and everyone on the periphery of such a relationship scores in one way or another: help with building a communal centre, ready access to the camp doctor, a free ride with a convoy to the nearest big town and back again, or perhaps a few additional litres of wine or petrol when the going is tough.

It is in the medical field that the Portuguese socio-economic campaign has made its most striking advances against the encroaching insurrection of the PAIGC, and here Spínola has been as good as his word that he would provide the people of Portuguese Guinea with the best facilities available in West Africa. In a measure he has succeeded, and in this respect alone he has won the support of most of the uncommitted black people of the enclave.

The Teixeira Pinto region has 10 fulltime doctors on its staff. Before the war there was only one. All of them are military personnel conscripted in Portugal or the Provinces for a two-year period of service in Africa. Unlike medical men serving elsewhere in the world, Portuguese army doctors start on the bottom rung of the promotion ladder. The medical officer in charge of the region is a lowly lieutenant. Most of his staff are Alfares, the equivalent of second lieutenant, with a salary of less than \$300 per month. The clinic at Teixeira Pinto, I was informed, had launched a massive inoculation campaign against smallpox, yellow fever, cholera, diphtheria, tetanus, and tuberculosis. There was a leprosy unit. The disease was endemic in certain parts of the region a generation ago. And they have had success. While the Republic of Guinea on the southern border was the first state to report an outbreak of cholera during the recent African epidemic, not a single case was reported among the civilian population of Portuguese Guinea. A number of PAIGC troops have been reported stricken with the disease, but they had obviously brought it with them when infiltrating from the south.

Teixeira Pinto also had its own maternity section and surgical unit

able to perform most routine operations. The more serious cases were evacuated to Bissau. It also had its own x-ray unit and a dentist and pediatrician for civilian work. One of the biggest medical bugbears, I gathered, was sleeping sickness, which had all but been eradicated from this part of Africa by the late fifties by the various colonial medical services working in concert with one another. After independence, anti-tsetse controls had been relaxed in Senegal and the fly was becoming more widespread. I had seen the same problem in Botswana in 1966 around the Okavango Swamp when I traveled through en route to South West Africa at the time. Tsetse had made a resurgence after the departure of British colonial officials who had battled for years to put the illness in check.

Much of the work done among the civilians was handled by a mobile clinic which toured the outlying regions. Every village in the zone not in regular contact with the more developed centres was visited at least once a month by a doctor and an army orderly. It surprised me that they went about unarmed.

Some idea of the work done by this 10-man medical team was given to me by Surgeon Lieutenant Joao Manuel Oliveira, a short, young-looking former Lisbon practitioner on whose shoulders rested the success or failure of the entire project. In the last three months of 1970, Oliveira said, reading from a list of graphs which decorated his office walls like misplaced Picassos in a miniature gallery, there had been 4,000 consultations and visits, of which about a quarter were for malaria which still ravages most of the west coast as it did in the early days. He had problems persuading tribesmen to take a weekly prophylactic, even though these were readily available free of charge. During this period there had been 400 admissions to the camp hospital and 125 evacuations to the main hospital at Bissau. There were 1,255 maternity visits recorded. There were also 104 cases of elephantiasis on his books. These figures were over and above 24,000 other treatments meted out by his staff. The figures included military personnel who needed attention.

Major Inocentes later gave me a run-down on military conditions in the zone. In the two years since January, 1969, that the colonel had been in command, there had been a number of actions with the guerrilla forces. During these 24 months altogether 40 Portuguese soldiers had been killed in the Teixeira Pinto zone and 330 received non-fatal wounds. Most of these incidents resulted in contact, one way or another, with the enemy, including ambushes and mines. He estimated that about 50 percent of the total casualties in his region were as a

result of accidents. Ten percent had been caused by mines, though that threat had diminished now that the road tarring project was nearing completion.

The colonel, Inocentes said, had refused to allow bombers to be used in the region. Because the PAIGC had had little success among the natives, he felt such action would "disturb the socio-economic balance." It could also frighten back to the bush those Africans who had sought refuge with the authorities. "We leave it to the people to compare what they are getting from us to what they could expect from the PAIGC should they come to power," he commented briefly.

* * * * *

Pelundo lies about 10 miles northeast of Teixeira Pinto. It is a camp not unlike those I had seen in the south, though there was a large village nearby which operated completely independently of military control. There were shops and houses, a large new school and clinic, and a number of expatriate Lebanese traders.

In charge of the area was one of the more interesting personalities I was fortunate to meet in this war, Lieutenant Colonel Nivio Herdade, another Moçambique veteran and a man who had spent many years in government service as an aide-de-camp in the Foreign Ministry.

During the late forties and early fifties he had spent a few years at the Portuguese colony of Macau on the Chinese mainland and watched the Chinese civil war and transition to communism at first hand. He had spent the last year of General Chiang Kai-shek's rule at a village about 50 miles inside Chinese territory and remained there for another 18 months after Mao Tse-tung's forces had overrun the vast country. He had then been released by the new communist government and was allowed to return to Macau. It was one of the more interesting chapters of his life, he said. To hear him tell it, it had been sheer fascination.

Colonel Herdade had also traveled extensively in independent Africa, an experience denied most Portuguese today because of the violent opposition of most black African states, following the advent of uhuru, to Lisbon's continued rule of its overseas provinces. As an official in the department of Foreign Affairs, he had accompanied

the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Franco Nogueira, to a meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa in the early sixties. Among the party at that time was a young mestiço, Jaime Pinto-Bull, brother of Dakar-based Benjamin Pinto-Bull, the leader of an anti-Portuguese splinter group which had been incorporated within FLING. The Portuguese delegation had been well received by the Ethiopians. Colonel Herdade was among the group that was wine and dined by Emperor Haile Selassie.

The story does not end there. Jaime Pinto-Bull, always a strong advocate of black cooperation with Portugal, was later elected to the Portuguese National Assembly in Lisbon and appointed Secretary General in charge of civil administration in Bissau, a post second only to the governor's and which entitled him to quasi-ministerial status throughout the Lusitanian empire. Jaime Pinto-Bull and two other Portuguese ministers together with eight airmen were killed in 1970 when the two helicopters they were traveling in were caught up in a tornado shortly after trying to return to Bissau from Teixeira Pinto. Only one of the bodies, that of a pilot, was found afterwards off Jeta Island. Naturally the PAIGC claimed they were responsible for shooting down the two aircraft shortly after the news was broadcast from Lisbon. The last man who had seen Pinto-Bull alive was Colonel Herdade. He had gone to see his old traveling companion off at the airport.

The garrison at Pelundo was one of the most pleasant and industrious I saw throughout the country. A strong one for discipline, the colonel believed implicitly in keeping his men busy for the sake of morale. "There is not much work to do and consequently we have to keep the men occupied to keep them healthy in mind and body during their two-year stint in the bush. It's the only way," he explained to me.

Many of the men were employed in construction work in the two outlying reordamentos. Others were detailed to tend the camp's large market garden which supplied enough fresh greens for all camps within a 50-mile radius. The tomatoes they grew were as big as grape fruit and they even kept the governor's kitchen in stock. More of the men were busy in a small nursery which cultivated orange trees, some of which would eventually be planted in the southern war zones. The soil, said Herdade, was good, but initially there had been a shortage of fresh water--the region is within the tidal zone--until he had sunk a few deep boreholes near the camp. Now there was enough for everyone. The colonel also had an interest in apiculture--wild bees were plentiful throughout the region. He kept dozens of hives in large trees all around the camp and had recently started exporting

wild honey to Europe. Certainly this was a man who knew what he was about and what he wanted.

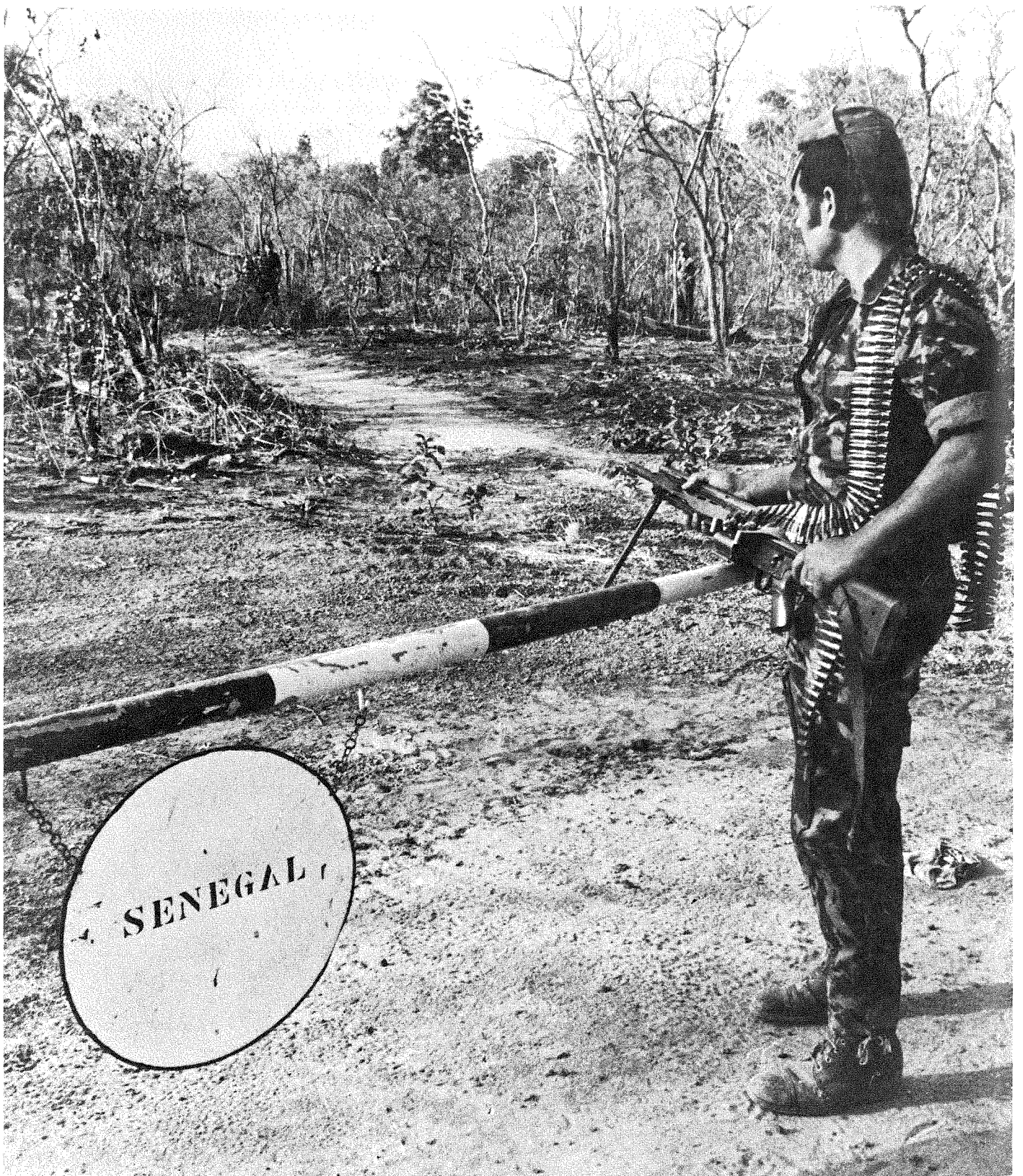
A day's routine started early, with reveille at 0630 hours. The men washed, dressed, and had breakfast and then paraded for colours and roll-call an hour later. They worked through to 1145 hours when lunch was served. A two-and-a-half hour siesta followed, after which the men were again required to work until 1715 hours. Dinner was served 15 minutes later. The rest of the evening was theirs, either in the camp or in the nearby village, except for those who had guard duty. Lights out was sounded an hour before midnight, although the men were allowed up all night on Saturdays.

The men under Colonel Herdade were representative of those in most other camps in Portuguese Guinea. These were ordinary soldiers with no specialty, either military or civilian, to fall back on once their period of service had been completed. With the exception of some of the officers and NCOs, they were conscripts almost to a man. Many had been waiters, farmers, or taxi drivers in civilian life. They would probably return to what they were when their two years were up, but perhaps that little bit wiser to the fact that their tiny insular world did not really end at the Spanish border. Most of these young fellows were simple country boys--poor but tough. Their needs are few. The criterion of their existence is their church, which is more of a way of life than a religion. In this respect the Portuguese soldier has been seriously underrated by the guerrilla forces, for it is his basic, uncomplicated nature which has kept Portugal in Africa for so long.

I was curious to know what the ordinary soldier in the Portuguese army was paid, and the colonel told me. Unmarried soldiers without rank received 500 escudos a month (about \$20). Those who had families to support were paid the same amount direct to their dependents in Portugal. The scale upwards through the various grades of non-commissioned rank was hardly as impressive. If a married lieutenant received \$140 a month for himself and his family, he was doing well. Comparable figures in the regular army in neighbouring black Senegal, he said--and this was later substantiated during my own visit to Dakar--was more than double that of Lisbon's troops. It was astonishing that Portugal has been able to keep its troops happy on a shoestring, but the fact that it does underlines the unquestioning nature of many of its people.

There are certain bonuses paid as incentives, I learnt later. For

every Kalashnikov taken from the enemy a man is paid about \$50, or more than double his salary. He or the patrol responsible for the capture of a Chinese or Russian RPG rocket gun received \$90. The men were paid the prize in cash on return from a patrol. There were no handouts for any number of enemy killed, wounded, or taken alive. Bissau was interested only in weapons, though the system seemed pointless with as much or more new weapons regularly being brought into the enclave for every gun lost by the PAIGC in action.



The Senegalese border in the north is well-defined and guarded.

XI

THE NORTH AND THE EAST

In Indochina the French failed to break the line between the guerrillas and the civilian population. Their failure was due not to a lack of understanding but to a lack of firm decision on counter-measures. Troops in the field, frustrated by the sullen uncommunicativeness of the population, were allowed to commit occasional excess and often to be simply rough in their handling of the civilians. In the same way, until it was stopped, police brutality in South Korea and the Philippines actually helped the communist partisans.

Major Hilaire Bethouart,
French Army

The poster on the drab, dusty wall of one of the small shops at Sare Bacar portrayed a simple message: "Juntos Venceremos," "Together we will win. Below the large inscription a black hand clasped that of a white. An arid mile away, fringed with stumps of fat grey-trunked baobabs and misshapen thorn bushes, was the Senegalese border. A new metalled highway ended abruptly at a sign attached to a chain stretched across the road. It read: "Senegal."

"Beyond is the enemy," remarked a bald-headed, aquiline-featured Portuguese who had earlier introduced himself as Captain Manuel Medina Matos. He was also from Lourenço Marques, one of a surprising number of Moçambicans I met in Guinea.

The tough, wiry captain, dressed in a faded green camouflage uniform which looked as if it had been through all three of Portugal's African wars, said there was a brace of enemy machine guns a few hundred yards into Senegalese territory, running parallel with the frontier. His intelligence network had informed him of the positions. They had also told him that the guns were placed in a defensive deployment "just in case our troops decide to wander about too far into Senghor's country."

The wind was blowing from the south. With a mischievous glint in his eye the captain pulled out a box of matches and set a few tufts of grass alight. He explained that the fire would carry through into Senegal and help to clear the bush and perhaps force the machine gunners to evacuate their posts. "We often play games like this with each other. When the wind blows from the north they try and set us alight. They almost succeeded once and that is why we have cleared the area around the camp for hundreds of metres."

Camp Sare Bacar, about half-a-mile from the village, was not like most of the other military concentrations I had seen elsewhere in the country. It was a hexagon, about 90 yards to a side, with observation posts at three of the points nearest the border. Not a tree sheltered the 165 men who lived in this bare and desolate corner of the country; not a blade of grass poked its way through the loose red soil which seemed to creep in everywhere. A light wind churned our steps into dust and our jeep was followed by thick vermillion layers 10 feet high. Sare Bacar was a lonely outpost in Europe's most enduring African empire.

Captain Matos explained that the men with him had been there a year and had another nine months to go. During their 21-month sojourn at Sare Bacar the officers--but not the men--were allowed to visit Bissau every six months or so for a few days' break. In a way, he said, the African draftees were the lucky ones. Had these troops not been posted overseas, their period of conscription in Portugal would have been extended by another year.

All the same, I observed, it was a lonely, austere existence for men used to an Iberian environment where the family was always on call and social life centered on the village barra. The isolation in Guinea hardly helped the morale of the Metropolitans, and conditions were only exacerbated by the monthly PAIGC attack, when they hurled rockets and mortars at the Portuguese from across the border. Anyone with a modicum of individuality, I could see, was soon driven to distraction by the rusty routine which went on unbroken for almost two years. Even among the officers--young conscript accountants, lawyers, engineers, architects, lecturers, and scientists thrown together in the potpourri of army life--there was much lacking, though these men had each other for company. I would have thought the lonely circumstances would have leant itself to homosexuality, but it had not, apparently, though all commanders were conscious of this possibility and watched for it keenly. A homosexual offence was a rare event among these devout Catholics.

Because there was nothing else to do, many of the young officers and NCOs had sought succour in matching wits with the enemy. Many had become accomplished killers who often learnt to know the jungle and bush around them as well as their own locally-born scouts. Some had earned reputations for themselves in the enclave and beyond and quite a few had substantial prices on their heads in Conakry and Dakar. To these men the fact that they were wanted by the PAIGC was an ample measure of achievement and they relished this notoriety.

But even so it was a slow, dreary war and the opportunity for combat did not often present itself. It was this boredom that prompted many of these men to volunteer for service in the commandos, the crack anti-insurgency units which are always stationed where the fighting is at its worst. Some eventually came to love the war and all its gory ramifications. Their personal problems will only be faced when it all ends--when the killing is over and they are forced to return to an ordered society where the primitive urges have to be kept in check.

The men at Sare Bacar thought highly of the Comandos Africanos. They had seen Bacar's men in action a few months previously when he had been stationed at Farim, to the south, where the authorities were building the road north. Speaking about the black fighters, the bald-headed officer, Captain Matos, maintained that Portugal should be thankful that they were there. "We have seen them in action," he said, "and they could smell a man's tobacco breath at a hundred meters. If they spotted a footprint in the sand they could tell us whether it was one of ours or that of the enemy, and how long since the person who had made it had passed along that way. They would follow a group for two days, whistle like birds when there was an alarm, and make the bush sounds of a dozen animals to keep track of developments between the two extremities of the patrol. They read the language of the jungle like you and I read a newspaper."

I had seen this for myself while with Bacar, in a region where every shadow that moves and the rustle of wind in a nearby thicket betrays the thoughts of yourself and those about you.

Captain Matos was responsible for an area of roughly 150 square miles, stretching for some distance along the Senegalese frontier southwards. Apart from his 165-man garrison, he had two African civilian militia groups under his command. His troops were divided into four combat groups, of which two were on patrol outside the main Sare Bacar camp at any given time. The two remaining patrols either rested or carried out guard duties. The attacks the camp had experienced

were mainly from 120mm Chinese rockets and mortars, usually fired from three or four miles away, well inside Senegalese territory.

Matos commented: "Their aim is putrid. You can see the tops of the buildings here from two or three miles away in this flat country, and they haven't hit them yet." He reckoned the calibre of the guerrillas in the north compared unfavourably with General Nino's forces on the Guinea-Conakry frontier. They were not as disciplined and hardly ever took the initiative. A close-up attack with bazookas and rifles was unknown. The northern guerrillas preferred to fire at the camps from across the border or to lay booby-traps along bush paths in the hope that someone would step on them and blow his legs off. Still, he had to keep his men on their toes for any eventuality, for the unexpected must always be guarded against. Sare Bacar was one of the camps which came under regular heavy attack and bombardment following the June, 1971, OAU resolution. Other camps hard hit were Cameconde and Gadamael in the south.

It was the same farther west at another guerrilla base in Senegal, Cuntima, which was located just south of Faquina. To me the only difference between Sare Bacar and Cuntima was the number of vultures I saw flying around Cuntima and the dozens of pencil-thin bush paths leading away into the bush in all directions. At least that was the way it looked from the air. Like Sare Bacar, Cuntima was only a mile from President Leopold Senghor's border.

At both Sare Bacar and Cuntima the commanding officers told me that, as in the south around Cameconde and Guilege, most of the guerrillas who passed through their regions were more interested in getting through to the interior around Mansoa and Mansaba where the road tarring project was in operation. Like Tite, this was also Balanta country, though there were Felupe tribesmen spread out along the border regions who did not tolerate any PAIGC presence. The Felupe attacked PAIGC patrols with guns given to them by the Portuguese, but more often they used their own primitive bows and arrows. Officers who had made contact with Felupe elders said that what had prompted this reaction was the fear among these Africans that PAIGC activities would deprive them of Portuguese medical facilities if the authorities lost control. For this reason there was little serious action in the border zones. Tribesmen living in southern Senegal also resented guerrilla attacks along the border region, for they made liberal use themselves of the free medical aid offered by Lisbon. Free medical aid to potential enemies was regarded by the Portuguese as good propaganda value, and they helped where they could.

Although the PAIGC was the controlling insurgent force in most of these areas, troops on the northern border of the enclave also had to contend with FLING, which was headquartered at Dakar. FLING is comprised of at least six breakaway liberation groups which operate out of the Senegalese capital. The oldest and largest of these is the MLG (Movimento de Libertação da Guiné) formed in 1960 by a veteran anti-Portuguese campaigner, François (Francis) Mendy Kankoila, a Manjaco exile who has lived most of his adult life in Senegal. Mendy is known in Africa by his middle name. Other groups included in this coalition are the FLG (Frente de Libertação da Guiné), the UPG (Uniao das Populações da Guiné), founded by Henry Labery, and the URGP (Union des Resortisants de la Guinee Portugaise), led by Benjamin Pinto-Bull, brother of Jaime who was killed in the 1970 helicopter crash. It is noteworthy that the brothers, Benjamin and Jaime, long at political loggerheads, were the sons of an Englishman who had married a local African girl. They had been well educated and were easily assimilated into Bissau's uppercrust Portuguese society. Both went to the top in their respective spheres of influence; Benjamin is as highly respected in his newly adopted African capital, Dakar, as Jaime was in Bissau and Lisbon. Benjamin, in fact, has never abandoned his dream of an independent Guinea which would retain close economic links with Lisbon, and this has made him suspect among some of the more radical elements within the movement. It is known that he visited Lisbon in June, 1963, and held discussions on this very topic. At present FLING draws most of its support from alienated Fulas, Manjacos, Mandingos, and Papeis. There are also some Balantas, though this tribe tends toward the PAIGC for reasons of their own.

Captain Matos opined that FLING, like the PAIGC, was partly hamstrung by the inability to establish forward bases in the arid north. They had mobile forward camps between Farim and Mansoa, but nothing permanent, such as has been expounded by Guevara, and for this reason there was a steady two-way traffic across the border. Territorial bases, FLING has maintained, quoting Guevara, are of great importance before any attempt is made to regularise operations. The guerrillas needed secure training and rest areas, supply dumps and hospitals, but like General Nino's troops in the south, they had to continue falling back across the border into Senegal for an effective back-up and chance of respite. It was the task of the border commanders like those at Sare Bacar and Cuntima to cut down these movements.

Captain Matos was convinced that, although the guerrillas had much tactical mobility and flexibility of employment, the absence of forward

bases was also the source of their greatest weakness. Insurgent logistics, he said, except in border areas, had difficulty supporting sustained combat operations, and the measure of Portugal's success in building its roads and villages in spite of severe guerrilla reaction was underscored by the lack of these insurgent facilities. His and other commanders' personal successes in managing to cut the flow in and out of the country to a minimum also contributed to the Portuguese war effort.

South of Sare Bacar, in the direction of Bafata, I was given the opportunity of visiting one of General Spínola's "self-defence" villages. It lay about three miles off the main road in country typical of most of the eastern portion of the enclave--undulating savannah country that had once supported massive herds of elephant, giraffe, and antelope. There is little game left now because the wild animals had given way to the Fula and Mandingo cattle herds we kept passing on the road south every few miles or so. This situation had come into existence long before the colonial interregnum had suspended the natural course of history in these parts.

The native cattle, scraggy and long-horned, have evolved over the centuries to a hardy breed capable of withstanding the ravages of tsetse fly, foot and mouth disease and, occasionally, rinderpest plagues which swept across Africa in years past leaving the countryside bare of all the creatures its richness had supported. It took years for the tribesmen to recover. But in the resilient African way, they did. New herds were bred or bought or brought in from other regions often from as far afield as Mali, on the border of Algeria, or Nigeria, towards the southeast. National boundaries, the invention of the white man, had restricted the mass migrations somewhat. Before he came, itinerant tribes wandered about this half of the continent from the Atlantic all the way through to Lake Chad and beyond, thousands of miles away. For this reason the Fulas had close tribal ties with Nigeria's Fulani kingdom--their characteristics, traditions, and language are similar, as is their Muslim religious affiliation.

The self-defence village at Cabele was a modest affair. Taken out of context it could have been any one of a dozen villages I had seen in my own travels about Senegal and Gambia. It struck me at the time that Cabele was not at all unlike Georgetown, a small Gambian town along the upper reaches of the Gambian river. Even the Creole these tall, dark people spoke, was similar.

Cabele had not experienced a guerrilla attack for some months. For

my benefit the Portuguese simulated one by sounding a gong which hung under a pepper tree of fine proportions in the centre of the village. Moments later a hundred men or more came running, clutching an array of weapons which included light machine guns, bazookas, and a sprinkling of Kalashnikovs. The majority were armed with the standard Portuguese G-3 carbine.

Each man went to a predetermined trench position on the edge of the village. Beyond them, a hundred yards away, barbed wire was stretched around the circumference of the settlement, complete with beer bottles and strips of metal tinsel which swayed in the breeze. Beyond that again, the land was cleared for another 200 yards, giving the defenders a clear field of fire of more than a quarter mile. Any enemy attacking would be exposed to retaliatory fire for much of that distance. I was also informed that the area beyond the wires was mined.

All self-defence camps in the country were arranged in this way, though Cabele was obviously a show-piece and probably better organised than most. The men were fairly adept in handling their weapons, though the Portuguese soldiers moving among them worked hard to get right the stance and fire angle of some of the volunteers. Clearly, they showed they meant business when protecting their families and livelihood from any PAIGC attack.

The camp operated a different system for day and night attacks. If the alarm was sounded after dark, four men would immediately run to their positions and set up a succession of flares which, I was assured, would "light up the bush like day." Each flare position had enough ammunition to keep up the brilliance all night if necessary.

Other men were in charge of the radio. It lay in the discretion of the headman whether to radio for army reinforcements or not. These could be on the spot within 20 minutes of a request going through. One of the first pointers made by this dignified old man--who wore his white, embroidered cassock-like robe with great dignity, together with a large amulet and a dagger on his left arm--was that it had never yet been necessary to call for additional help during any of the attacks that had taken place. Every onslaught had been fought off by his own men and boys; one youngster could not have been more than 10 years old, but he handled his gun with the expertise of an adult.

Malaya had taught the PAIGC the essential strength of a resettlement plan, and for this reason they used every means to delay and hinder

its operation. In Malaya, the resettlement of large numbers of civilians had had a twofold effect. It made the Communist terrorists, as they were referred to in British reports, come to well-defined areas to collect food and supplies and thus expose themselves. The same was happening in Portuguese Guinea as PAIGC tabancas become fewer. Furthermore, it raised the morale of the uncommitted civilians by giving them better living conditions and thus taking them beyond contact with the guerrilla troops. It is axiomatic that contented citizens are more likely to cooperate with security forces than are discontented ones.

In order to facilitate the establishment of these villages, aldeamentos and reordamentos, the Portuguese were at first obliged to consolidate their positions in well-held areas. For this and other reasons, a number of camps in remote areas were closed. The PAIGC saw these withdrawals as massive victories and have rarely failed to play on them at international meetings. Foreign journalists and television teams brought in with the PAIGC are always shown these abandoned camps as proof of the guerrillas' success. But the salient fact is that every single one of these camps were in positions too remote to be of strategic consequence; or, as one Portuguese officer explained to Jim Hoagland: "We closed them because it cost too much to get a bottle of beer down there from Bissau. There are other bases we would have closed because there was no population, but we won't close them any more now because of the propaganda PAIGC makes about them." Camps which have been closed by the Portuguese include Beli, Ganture, Sanchonha, and Cacocoa, most of which were in the extreme east or southeast of the disputed territory.

I was taken by road from the north to Bafata, the second largest city of Portuguese Guinea, along a straight tarred highway that led through country whose soporific monotony could easily have nodded an army off to sleep had the trip gone on long enough. Our jeep traveled ahead of a Unimog looking more like an armoury than an escort vehicle. The region had once been hotly contested, my aide told me, but since the road had been completed, the enemy had lost the initiative, mainly because the guerrillas' main means of inflicting damage--by sowing mines--had been removed. Nevertheless, the Portuguese could take no chances, and it was only when we reached Contubael, about halfway between the border and Bafata, that our escort left us and we traveled alone into the inchoate dusk, colours spraying across the western sky towards the Atlantic, greens and reds mingling with all shades of orange and purple. The African sunset seen like this never ceases to transfix even the most blasé

traveler. Even the hardened troops I was with commented on the beauty.

Bafata was a quiet town situated on a row of hills overlooking the river. It was cleaner and quieter than Bissau and the climate hardly a fraction as intemperate, although it lay near the headwaters of the same river which eventually wound murkily past the capital. All roads appeared to run either up or down the high-lying ground, with few connecting in between. We arrived shortly before dinner, which was held with great ceremony in the officers' mess, a low bungalow near the middle of town. It was a special occasion in honour of the visiting journalist. Whisky again.

We were then taken to a football match at the town stadium where the Bafata garrison was defending its honour against the up-country champions from Farim. Africans from miles around had converged on the field, crowding the stands and every available standing space. Others peered over the high walls or hung precariously from branches on trees which surrounded the stadium. Farim took the honours. But it was an unpopular decision, although the up-country players obviously had the edge on the home team. Hoots and boos echoed through the night.

Later the same night I was taken to a Mandingo ceremony a few miles out of town, beyond the airstrip. A group of youths and maidens had recently been circumcised and this was to be their "coming-out" ceremony after having been in isolation for 40 days. The ritual was every bit as serious as a pontifical mass, although the final night was given over to a frenzy of festivity and palm wine drinking which, I was told by one of the local doctors who was interested in African traditions and customs, would go on until morning.

We visited the village in one of the army jeep station wagons. Only when we had left the lights of Bafata behind us did I realise that not one of the men was armed. The only precaution they took against a possible attack was to remove their shoulder tabs so as not to be immediately recognisable as officers.

The village loomed up suddenly in the dark. We could hear the drums a long way off, but there were no lights--only a low smoky fire around which the novitiates danced. All of them--there were about two dozen boys and girls, ranging in age from about 8 to 18--were naked and covered in a dull white paint which, in the shadowy light, made them look like so many Pierrots out of a French pantomime. Now that the necessary rituals

had been performed, the medical officer informed me, these youngsters would be ready to take their place in society as adults.

We were warmly welcomed by the villagers after they had recognised our doctor guide, who was obviously a regular visitor. They did not resent our intrusion, as I had expected they would, for it is not often that the white man is allowed to enter the esoteric domain of tribal custom. We were offered the choice of palm wine or soured goat milk which had been mixed with fresh blood taken from a cow sacrificed earlier that evening. We all opted for the wine, and left, as we had arrived, silently, about an hour later. For a long while the atavistic throb of drums followed us down the long track back to town. "This was part of that irresistible urge which had brought generations of explorers and settlers back to Africa, time and again," said the lieutenant-doctor as we drove towards Bafata. The mysterious lure is a powerful one and is probably one of the reasons why there are today almost five million white people living and working on the "Dark Continent."

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I spent two days at Nova Lamego, eastern stronghold of General Spinola's forces in Portuguese Guinea. Like the others, the road from Bafata was tarred throughout. Here, for the first time, I saw signs of normal habitation along the way, in a region which the PAIGC often claims as having been "liberated." Civilian cars passed us regularly, going in both directions between the two centres. Some were heavily loaded with sacks of produce and passengers. A few trucks rolled by, each carrying an assortment of animals--cattle, goats, chickens, and one with a huge sow billowing with fat, securely strapped between four poles on the carrier and squealing with each movement of the truck along the road. The countryside on both sides of the road was well-cultivated, dotted every so often by small thatched villages, each with a wide matting fence surrounding the living quarters to keep animal night prowlers at bay.

We reached Nova Lamego at noon, and here, for the first time during my visit, I was to be the guest of a civilian, the regional administrator. Until now I had mixed solely with the army and air force and, although I had come into contact with few Chefes de Poste such as the one at Tite, these muftied functionaries had interested me. At first glance their role among the Africans seemed superfluous, for the army appeared to have everything under control. After all, I

commented to one of the officers, was General Spínola not the civilian and the military governor of the enclave?

Dr. Aguiñaldo Spencer Salomao, a tall, bushy man, had spent 23 years--most of his adult life--in the enclave's civil service. Salomao had received an English education and was a confirmed Anglophile. His father was a great admirer of Churchill, thus the name. For a while during the last war the elder Salomao had worked for the British Secret Service in Lisbon. Young Salomao had learnt this fact from his late father a few weeks before he died when all the family secrets had been bared to him as the only son and heir.

If the lugubrious Chefe de Poste at Tite had been a disappointment, Aguiñaldo Salomao was certainly a breath of vitality in the otherwise hidebound realm of Portuguese officialdom in Guinea. A cultured man, his pleasant double-storied home near the centre of town bore the mark of its master. His books in English, French, and Portuguese ranged over every subject imaginable, from animal husbandry, which also fell within his province, to the works of Henri Bataille and Sartre's plays. His record library was equally vast, though he preferred Vivaldi to Schöenberg, but he was not so conservative that he could not produce a Beatles recording. He liked some of the group's earlier work, he said. The administrator was also interested in astronomy, and the clear tropical night skies in his region gave him ample opportunity to pursue this bent, though he could only afford a small reflector telescope. From others I gathered he was a mathematician of some repute.

Salomao was responsible for the welfare of almost 100,000 people in his region, or about a fifth of the entire population. Among these were 10,000 Mandingo and 72,000 Fula, as well as a vast range of sub-tribes, each with its own prejudices and idiosyncracies which had to be considered whenever he made a decision which affected the welfare of the whole. His town, Nova Lamego, had a population of about 3,000, of which 100 were white Metropolitan civilians. He did not encourage white traders to enter the area. His reason for this was simple. "These people come here to trade with the locals. They do not have the welfare of the country at heart and are often unscrupulous in their dealings with the simple-minded tribesmen." He deplored the man who came to Africa to sell as much to the Africans as he could and then leave again to settle comfortably in Europe, contributing nothing socially, intellectually, or culturally to the society that had nurtured him.

His knowledge of Africa was encyclopedic. He knew the customs,

traditions, tribal connections, beliefs, and history of just about every major ethnic group on the west coast of Africa as far south as the Zambian and Congolese frontiers. He could speak five of their languages fluently and before independence had visited many of the capitals of what is today known as Free Africa.

Militarily, conditions were not at all bad in the region. Osvaldo Viera had men stationed south of Nova Lamego and a few in the extreme east, but it was not often that they ventured as far into the hinterland as the town. For this reason all the troops in Nova Lamego had been withdrawn to the central barracks, whereas they had been previously deployed throughout the centre, to prevent a surprise infiltration by the PAIGC. The local garrison commander was confident that the local Africans, who were mostly loyal to the Portuguese, would sound the alarm if the guerrillas tried to move in from the bush. Until Spínola had arrived, most black civilians were suspect PAIGC sympathisers, as many probably had been in the early days of the war.

The last attack had come a few months before I arrived there, at about 10:00 in the evening, with 125 mortar bombs raining down on the settlement for 10 minutes before the insurgents withdrew. Altogether 15 civilians had been killed (all blacks) and 40 wounded. Only one building had been hit, the hotel, but the few guests that were there at the time had taken refuge in a bunker. Since June, 1971, however, Nova Lamego has been attacked in force.

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There is a strange unreality about the war in Portuguese Guinea. On the one hand there are routine patrols, and contact with the enemy is a fairly regular event throughout much of the enclave. This is coupled with daily bombing sorties against known enemy positions in the jungle. On the other, one rarely sees the guerrillas. Even when an ambush has been laid by the PAIGC and the Portuguese have suffered casualties, it is rare to speak to a Portuguese soldier who has actually seen the insurgents firing at him or his colleagues. Dead, or the rare captured PAIGC fighter, yes; alive and active out in the jungle, hardly ever, and then only by troops in ambush who have been lucky enough to have the guerrillas walk into one of their traps.

The black guerrilla consequently remains a mysterious, potent

nonentity which the Portuguese security cloud does not help to define. Whereas I met dozens of ex-MPLA and UPA/GRAE terrorists in Angola, I came into contact with only a handful of ex-PAIGC in Portuguese Guinea, although it is known that Spínola has ex-guerrilla units fighting for him in the Oio region--men who have compromised themselves by disclosing everything they knew to the Portuguese and whom the authorities trust because, should they try to return to their own units, they would be excuted as traitors. Many of these men have led Portuguese units back to their old bush camps. That they did this at gunpoint is of no concern to the PAIGC. These men had defected as surely as had they slipped away at night and presented themselves to the nearest Portuguese commander.

I was to hear about an instance a few days later at Bambadinca, a small hillside town overlooking the Corubal region south of Bafata from where I had traveled by jeep with two staff officers. We were unescorted, though both men were armed. Like the route to Nova Lamego, this stretch was also tarred. At Bambadinca, Lt. Colonel Joao Monteiro, head of Battalion 2917 (motto: Bravos e Sempre Leias) was headquartered. The campsite with the river below was idyllic and would probably have made a beautiful tourist resort, for the weather was temperate and there was none of the humidity of the soggy coastal region.

Colonel Monteiro's region included the confluence of the Geba and Corubal rivers, another area that had seen much bitter fighting in the pre-1968 period. One attack had occurred there when an infiltration group spearheaded northwards across the border from Kandiafara in a bid to cut and mine the Bafata road. The unit had hit Bambadinca one evening from across the river and had then withdrawn to a predetermined position in the jungle to wait out the following day before joining up with two other bi-groups. This combined force was then expected to hit at other positions during the following days. But something went wrong. A scouting party from the attack group ran into one of Colonel Monteiro's patrol's and was captured intact without a shot being fired. One of the men was a senior PAIGC officer.

The four men were taken back to Bambadinca by helicopter, where the PAIGC officer was given the choice of either telling all or accepting the consequences. The same morning General Spínola had the entire battle plan in his hands. Two companies of commandos were airlifted into the region and dispersed around the meeting point. Although contact between the two guerrilla parties was only to be

made at night, it was felt necessary to bring helicopters into the fray, although these are rarely operational after dark. The aircraft would be used in a bid to drive the guerrillas on to a tiny defensive position on the edge of the river. With no boats it was anticipated that the entire group would capitulate.

But the Portuguese had not counted on PAIGC discipline. The fight was bloody and the guerrilla losses many, and almost two-thirds of the insurgents, including a number of wounded, managed to escape into the night, past well-laid commando positions. According to the colonel, some of the men must have crawled past on hands and knees within feet of the surrounding Portuguese. There was no doubt about it, Monteiro said, the Portuguese were up against some tenacious fighters whose discipline equalled and in some instances surpassed their own. These were mainly Nino's men.

Here again Guevara's theories had come to the fore. Nino, it is known, is an ardent follower of this one-time Argentinian doctor who distinguished himself with Castro against Batista's government forces. Guevara stressed time and again in his writings that although most guerrillas are driven to fight by an individual conviction, the end product was a combination of this conviction and a discipline which was extremely severe. Nino had followed these teachings to the letter for he, too, felt that only under such a discipline could the men meet the extraordinary physical and emotional demands placed upon them by this type of irregular warfare.

In the overall picture, the colonel explained, a Nino in supreme command of the PAIGC could hold many more problems for General Spínola than at present. Nino prefers aggressive penetration of any region he operates in. He has long advocated similar tactics in the north and the east, although socio-economic conditions in both these zones differ vastly from the south, radically altering the scope, nature, and intensity of the war in these parts, as has been seen along the Bafata-Nova Lamego axis.

The biggest drawback in applying this system, however, lies in effective command. If results are not forthcoming from the leaders, the irregulars lay themselves open and vulnerable to psychological attack, and this is the opening Spínola is waiting for.

XII

ANGELS OF MERCY

From the strategic point of view, guerrilla warfare, causing many difficulties and losses to the enemy, wears him out. To annihilate big enemy manpower and liberate land, guerrilla warfare has to move gradually to mobile warfare or what Mao has termed the Third Phase.

General Vo Nguyen Giap

Natercia de Conceicao Pais is a warm, winsome woman of about 26. She is a member of General Antonio de Spínola's military forces in Portuguese Guinea.

The troops and airmen with whom she comes into daily contact call her the Angel of Mercy, but she offers an oblique smile when men equate her and her co-workers with the sublime, for there is more than an element of truth in the epithet.

Para-nurse Pais, feminine and patently naive about the affairs of men, is part of Portugal's newly-formed women's parachute corps, which is active in all three of Lisbon's African war zones. The Guinea contingent numbers about a dozen girls. They are based at Bissalanca Airport and work regular shifts so that there are always two nurses ready for take-off at a moment's notice, day and night. Whenever there has been an attack in the jungle, the girls are flown in to tend the wounded or help evacuate the worst casualties to hospital by aircraft or helicopter.

The para-nurse corps is a living contradiction of the traditional role of Portuguese women--a protected, almost enshrined domestic breed who rarely venture beyond the kitchen portal, or at the most, go to the market or to church on Sundays. If necessary, the nurses will rough it. If the action has taken place in a remote spot in the southern or central jungles where it is not possible, or too dangerous, to land, the nurses go in by parachute. Experience has taught Portuguese High Command that the presence of a woman in times of severe strife does much

for the morale of fighting men isolated in the forest for years at a stretch. In the five years that these tough young female nurses have been in action, particularly in Angola and Portuguese Guinea, statistics have proved that the recovery rate of the injured is generally much better than when they are attended to by male medics.

Corporal-nurse Pais had her own reasons for joining the army. Young, highly intelligent, and by her own admission, as yet never having been seriously in love (although she receives on average three marriage proposals a week), she joined the war effort four years ago. Until then she had worked as a doctor's receptionist in a small town in northern Portugal. Her formative years were ordinary, like those of the dozen or so other girls in her class with whom she had grown up. Of them all she was the only one who, until then, had traveled more than 20 miles from the village in which they were born.

Why did she join the army? Para-nurse Pais was evasive at first, but as I got to know her better once we had run through our first two evacuations together, she admitted that after she left school she felt she was getting nowhere and dreaded the prospect of marrying the village baker or dentist, bringing her children up within the confines of a closed, parochial society, and eventually dying within a day's walk, perhaps, of where she had been born. When the call had gone out for nurses to help in the Provinces, she was one of the first to enlist. There was little that was altruistic about her motives. She saw an opportunity and took it. If she had not been accepted by the military authorities, she was fairly certain she would have moved to the cosmopolitan environment of Lisbon, where life, she subsequently found, was more to her liking.

Natercia was an attractive girl. I asked her whether being in daily contact with so many men, many of them eligible bachelors, did not result in a certain amount of frustration and tension, particularly among some of the young pilots who shared the Ready Room at the airport. Under similar circumstances in another army a woman with her looks, drive, and personality would have been snapped up long ago by some dashing young fighter pilot. She was uncomprehending at first; when I elaborated, she smiled and answered lightly that neither she nor the other girls could allow personal feelings to interfere with duty. It was an unlikely answer but I believed her, for these women led a difficult and often hazardous existence where all attention was focused on today and tomorrow took care of itself. Some had

been killed in action, mostly in aircraft accidents. Natercia perhaps was not conscious of it, but the strain showed through; the lines around her eyes told their own story.

Para-nurse Pais observed, "It is not an easy job coming into almost daily contact with the shells of men blasted apart by enemy fire and trying to keep them alive long enough to make the base hospital." She did not elaborate, but it was her third year of active duty in Guinea.

The first time I went out with her on an assignment was to evacuate a young soldier who had been seriously wounded in the head and arm by a mine which had killed two of the men in front of him on a jungle patrol. I had specifically asked to be allowed to accompany one of these evacuation air lifts. The Portuguese agreed, but warned at the same time that I would have to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. When there were men dying in the field they could not be expected to wait for a curious journalist to finish his dinner.

The call came a few minutes after I had returned from my two-day patrol at Tite with Joao Bacar. A jeep would pick me up immediately, I was told in peremptory English by the switchboard operator. Meanwhile, a para-nurse was preparing herself and her equipment for the evacuation. Although I was dirty, hot, and tired after my 48-hour march in the sticky jungle heat, I accepted the opportunity with alacrity.

An Alouette helicopter was waiting for us at Bissalanca. Nurse Pais had been briefed. We set off immediately, heading south across the island towards Tite. The wounded man, I was told, had been brought to the edge of a rice paddy about three miles from the garrison town by his patrol. A situation report had been issued and it was the pilot's job to find him.

We reached the zone ten minutes later and circled for a few minutes, all three of us looking for some tell-tale sign below which would indicate where to land. There was nothing. The pilot took his craft lower, hugging the tops of tall palms which lined paddies as far as we could see, and widened his circle. We caught sight of a scattered patrol headed north into a jungle zone, but this was not the group we were looking for. They were not expecting us.

At one stage we put down alongside another patrol which was resting in a paddy. No, its members said, the wounded man was not one of



A casualty is treated at a base airport before being moved to hospital.

theirs. They directed us farther towards the east, where there had been reports of a casualty.

The spot where we finally touched down was clearly a war zone. Members of the patrol were spread out in a semi-circle around a makeshift landing pad--the rice had been cut away to form a square on which we could land. The weapons of the men were all pointing towards the nearby jungle. Aerial patrols in the region had indicated that there was a strong guerrilla unit in the area. This patrol had been searching for them when one of the Portuguese soldiers had walked over a mine. Because of the immediate danger of attack we were on the ground barely a minute before we had the casualty on board and were heading back to Tite. Pais meanwhile busied herself with stemming the flow of blood from the man's mangled arm. His head wound had coagulated and he was unconscious, but blood continued to spurt from the other wound even though it was covered by a temporary battle-dressing which the unit's medical orderly had strapped into place immediately after the blast. When she removed the pad more blood spurted in all directions. She clamped a firm thumb of one hand above the shattered artery, while with her free hand she replaced the dressing with a fresh one. Before she had finished wiping the blood off of her arms and hands, we were ready to touch down at Tite.

The man we had evacuated from the rice paddy near Tite was not seriously injured, we learnt later. He was airlifted the following day to Bissau. A piece of shrapnel above his right ear would keep him in hospital maybe a month. A fraction of an inch lower and the jagged edge of steel would have penetrated his brain.

There were other cases brought in, Natercia told me, which were far more serious than this one. The girls only tended the worst of them--those with minor wounds were either treated on the spot or returned to base with the first convoy. The role of the girls was primarily of an emergency nature, but they seemed to take everything in their stride. "We see some terrible sights," said another of the girls, Paula de Santos, when I met others in the contingent later the same day. "But with a dozen girls in any army of 30,000 here in Guinea, it is as much as we can do to keep abreast of our duties and not become emotionally involved in this tragedy, this war."

Brain injuries affected the girls the most: those cases who were not killed but who had received head wounds and lost all reason because of cerebral damage. The girls referred to these victims as the "mindless ones." They and the quadriplegics, after a month or two of local



All serious casualties are evacuated by aircraft for specialist treatment in Europe. The man on the upper bunk, almost cut in two by a mine explosion, did not survive the flight.

treatment, were usually flown out to Portugal in casualty flights which left each week for the capital. It was also one of the tasks of the girls to accompany the wounded on these flights and they worked this additional duty on a roster basis. The flights, which often lasted eighteen hours, were gruelling, but the girls did not mind as the trip allowed them a day or two in the Metropolis.

I was scheduled to travel out of Bissau on one of these flights at the end of my tour. The standard aircraft used by the Portuguese Air Force was a DC-6 which shuttled between Lisbon and Bissau. Similar aircraft ply between the capital and major centres in Angola and Moçambique.

Sixty-four passengers eventually left on the aircraft. There were about 30 wounded among the troops departing for home. The rest--apart from myself, the para-nurse, and the crew--were being repatriated after completing their regular tours of duty.

Four of the men on board were on stretchers which were placed on racks near the rear of the plane. One of them, a mine victim, was unconscious, his eyes sunken and cheek-bones protruding as if in death. He required constant attention from the nurse, who checked his pulse and blood pressure at short intervals. He had been cut almost in two by a mine, and to my unpracticed eye in these matters, looked as if he could not possibly last out the long flight. The rest of the wounded were either heavily bandaged or in plaster casts, and sat upright in their seats. Some were in obvious pain. My flight companions were a macabre lot, though most could manage a smile at the prospect of going home.

We were heavily loaded, "down to the last kilo" as the navigator later phrased it. Two soldiers also scheduled for departure were on standby at Bissalanca in case additional weight could be taken and one or both could be included on the flight. It was a lengthy business. Our scheduled time for departure was at first light. We left five hours later, of which an hour had been spent in the stifling cabin of the DC-6, which was parked on the edge of the runway while adjustments were made to the hydraulic landing gear.

We had been in the air about two hours and were approximately 150 miles out over the Atlantic west of Dakar when the first engine seized. I had been sleeping, my head resting on the padded aircraft frame, when a change in the vibrations and engine pitch woke me. I opened my eyes to see the propeller of the port inboard engine feathered and

the aircraft banking sharply on its turnabout. A stream of incomprehensible Portuguese poured from the intercom system. I was only afterwards informed that we were on our way back to Bissau, though this was obvious from the start. Minutes later a second engine--the starboard outer, this time--spluttered and coughed. The plane lost height rapidly and we were clearly in serious trouble.

As a precaution all cigarettes were doused and the crew hastily ditched fuel to lessen the weight; it streamed out from under the wings in a dramatic billow of white mist.

The prospect of making a forced landing at sea off the African coast was not encouraging, even though we could spot six or eight ships in the immediate vicinity below us--we were over one of the major Europe-round-the-Cape shipping lanes. I hardly relished the idea of clamouring into the shark infested waters with so many men with open wounds, even if they could all get out before the aircraft foundered.

In a bid to maintain altitude, the aircrew did not feather the second engine but kept it going in spite of overheating. It continued malfunctioning all the way back to Bissau. The initial return course was set for Dakar where, theoretically, it would be possible to make an emergency landing, if necessary. The only problem was that Senegal was at war with Portugal and the kind of welcome we would receive was problematical. But near Dakar the aircrew decided to continue southwards, first past Bathurst, about 100 miles on, and then the final hop to Bissau. We landed at Bissalanca with fire-engines and troops in attendance. No one said a word until we were finally on the tarmac and even then most spoke in hushed whispers. It had been close, a crew member said softly.

It had been the helplessness of the situation which had really bugged me, sitting there with 60 others in the crippled aircraft and incapable of lifting a finger to help. In spite of the tension, the aircrew had seemed to take things as a matter of course. Although I could not understand what was being said, their announcements over the intercom had been neither rushed nor excited. At one stage on the return leg, the captain, a middle-aged four-ringer, had walked through to the rear, offering advice when it was asked for and generally very much in control of a situation charged with emotion and fear, particularly for some of the younger conscripts who had probably never flown before. Many had been drafted to Guinea by ship.

The hero of this near-catastrophe was a young para-nurse, who had

flitted among her wounded charges like a breath of hope--laughing, helping, adjusting, advising. Through the smiles and light-hearted quips, there had been only a touch of strain on her face. She had been as nervous as the rest of us, but by the time the gravity of the situation struck home, she could hardly waver in her task, for she had become a symbol to just about everyone on board, including myself. What a girl! Trim, attractive, and as tough as nails.

After we had landed safely, I spoke to her through an interpreter. Like Natercia Pais, she had been on the job for just on three years. This had been her second aircraft emergency while in charge of patients. This one, she said, had been the worst because of the stretcher cases. While the other wounded could probably have helped themselves with a little assistance, the four immobilized soldiers were in a critical condition and, even had she been able to get them into a boat, they would have needed immediate medical attention. "Still," she said with a smile, making the sign of the cross, "we made it."

Because of other commitments, I departed the following morning on a scheduled TAP Boeing 727 which called in at Bissau en route from Sal, the major Cape Verde island. The Air Force DC-6 also left again the following day, but was once more forced down with engine trouble. They made it eventually on the third try.

The standard of maintenance of Portuguese Air Force planes is high. It is generally accepted in NATO circles that Portuguese aircraft workmanship is above average of much of that of Europe. But aircraft grow old, and there is an operational age limit on the number of years a plane can be effectively used. One authority with whom I came into contact subsequently and who has been a regular observer of Portugal's African wars, put it this way: "When a Portuguese aircraft does not fly it is not because of a lack of maintenance, but more likely because there is no cash for spares." He also pointed out that although Portugal had acquired aircraft since 1960, all these had been bought second hand. The last new aircraft to be taken into service by the Portuguese Air Force was acquired in 1954.

For this reason Lisbon has fought hard to buy second hand Boeing passenger jets from Mr. Nixon's government to supplement its military transport wing. Undoubtedly the American cut-back in Vietnam and the number of redundant USAF transports swung the sale in Mr. Caetano's favour in spite of a vociferous Afro-Asian outcry at the United Nations and other centres.

The para-nurse on board the DC-6 was, like all the others, a volunteer. She told me that all her colleagues were fully-trained medical personnel, most of whom had formerly worked in comfortable jobs in the Metropolis.

The girls, she said, were put through an intensive and rigorous year-long training course, which included additional medical training in the field and a minimum of six free-fall parachute jumps in order to qualify for their para-wings and postings abroad. The girls were also taught the rudiments of self-defence and weaponry. Although they were non-combatants, none had any illusions what would happen to them should they fall into the hands of the enemy. It was strange, one of them confided, they feared this PAIGC enemy, yet a fair percentage of the men they treated were wounded guerrillas. She explained this was due to General Spínola's "grand design" to treat the enemy on equal terms whenever contact was made--a pillar of his all embracing socio-economic programme. Wounded guerrillas are consequently admitted to the same hospitals as wounded Portuguese troops. They also receive the same treatment in the same wards as their adversaries.

This aspect of Spínola's plan has met with some resentment among the troops, particularly among the hard core of the military elite, who regard concessions as a sign of weakness on the part of Mr. Caetano's "enlightened" regime. Their argument, which is not entirely invalid, is that if Portugal is to continue fighting a war in Africa, any concession of this nature can only be construed as a sign of weakness by the insurgents. Although most of the enemy taken in battle are rehabilitated, some are not. In any event, they maintain, it hardly does much for the morale of the men to be sharing the same facilities with men who only a few days before had been intent on killing or maiming them. Yet that is Portuguese philosophy and it will be interesting to see the outcome.

There is a room at Bissalanca Airport where most aircrew members gather prior to takeoff. In Portuguese it was what the RAF would have called the "Ready Room." Apart from the central operations headquarters in Bissau itself, this was probably the most important control centre in the entire war, for it was here that the final operations scramble came through on a buzzer behind the bar. A few words from the barman directed at the flight commander, and half a dozen young men--and the para-nurses, if required--would grab their flying helmets, padded jackets, and other gear, and dash out to the waiting jeeps, which would shoot across the tarmac at a dizzy speed towards the

waiting jets and Harvards. Attack details were passed to the aircrews once they were in the cockpit and connected to the control tower by radio. Not a second could be spared. I witnessed this scene often, for I spent almost as much time in the Ready Room as I did in town when I was not out in the bush. The routine reminded me vividly of the film, "Battle of Britain"; the Portuguese take their war seriously.

The Ready Room was part of a low cluster of bungalows tucked away in the lee of some larger hangar-like buildings in the military section of the airport. An armed guard stood at the wire railing which led to the pilots' enclosure. Security was tight, but once they got used to my almost daily calls, I could pass as and when I pleased.

The room itself was a pleasant change from the drab, torpid world outside. The first time I entered the centre, with its long high bar at the far end and a record player echoing melancholy strains of Simon and Garfunkel, I thought it was the local discotheque. Some pilots and a para-nurse were playing cards on a small table to my left, immediately in front of the turntable. To my right two young men in their distinctive royal blue nylon flying suits--they looked so young they could have been students at a Lisbon bistro--matched wits over a game of chess. Each of the men was armed with a heavy service revolver in a shoulder holster under the left arm. This was to be their defence in the event of their coming down over the jungle. I was told that each aircraft was also provided with a submachine gun, which was mounted in a rack at the rear of the cockpit.

The barman was big and affable, as some barmen are, wherever you meet them. I was offered the choice of coffee or a raspberry or chocolate milkshake. For once whisky did not rate. That was reserved for our return. Portuguese airmen may not take alcohol for the 24-hour period before operations. The rule is strictly enforced.

One of the older hands with whom I had much contact during my stay was Sergeant Piloto Miliciano Jose Manuel Carvalho, 22 years old, almost four years of which he had spent in the PAF. For two of these years he had been flying in Guinea. He had another eight months to go in Bissau and counted the days religiously.

Like most of the other pilots, Carvalho could speak good English. I asked him why so many of the fliers looked as if they were still in their teens. "But many of them are," he answered, a little taken aback at the question. "We join when we are 17 or 18 and are given two years' training. Then we are sent out on active duty in Africa--or those that

manage to pass the course." Most of his colleagues, he explained, were conscripts. They had joined because they knew they would be taught to fly. When they had finished their period of service--about seven years--they would be free to join the national commercial airline, TAP, or any other international airline that would have them after they had obtained the necessary ratings. Many of them later did just that.

Although he was a regular fighter pilot in the Portuguese Air Force, he was not commissioned because he preferred to retain his draftee status. That way he knew he could get out when his time was up. If he joined the regular air force the course of the war would dictate demobilisation, and as his country had been fighting for 12 years in various parts of Africa already, there was no telling how much longer the conflict would go on. Most of his young colleagues were, like him, conscripts.

"But that does not mean that we sergeants are not good pilots. Our best pilot until recently was a conscript sergeant. He could outshoot and outmaneuver anyone on the base, including some of the old hands with ten years more experience than himself. He was a real natural; now he's back in Lisbon."

Carvalho was a versatile flyer, in spite of his age. He had graduated to jets the year before, but had also flown Harvards and Dorniers. He would soon be on Noratlas transport aircraft, he said. Pilots who were rested from active duty were either drafted to the transport wing or flew the slower, bulkier Dorniers, which were used in spotter or ferrying roles.

I was curious to know how much action Carvalho had seen during his period of service in the enclave. Had he ever been shot at from the ground? "Of course. That is what we are here for," he smiled. It was not often that pilots encountered resistance, he volunteered, but on two occasions he had nosed his way through heavy flak during an attack. The first time it had scared the pants off him, and he had dropped his bomb load short. A shell had exploded in a puff of black smoke only a few hundred feet below him while dive bombing. The next time he kept on going and managed to wipe out the position, detonating part of a PAIGC ammunition dump as well. The only other time he had been fired on from the ground was while flying a Harvard over a remote area in the south. The PAIGC regular army, FARP, was reported active in the region and they opened up on him before he had spotted their position. He and two other aircraft were guided in by

the smoke of their anti-aircraft fire. They hit the target, but had no way of knowing what damage had been caused because the firing stopped after the first run in. He was convinced the FARP unit was using Chinese munitions because Soviet tracer bullets are smokeless.

I ventured a question to which I and a number of other correspondents had been trying to find an answer for years. Had any of their aircraft been shot down by the guerrillas? Carvalho was very discreet. Yes and no, he answered cautiously. Some planes had been lost in accidents caused mainly by engine failure. Only days later did he intimate that as far as he knew only one PAF fighter, also a Harvard, had actually been shot down in action and the pilot killed. "But there have been other times when it has been close."

One of the main problems faced by PAIGC gunners was that they did not appear to be familiar with the accepted system of firing at fast moving targets. They mostly aimed directly at the aircraft instead of a little ahead of it. Consequently tracers usually shot harmlessly by behind the plane. For this reason most attacks launched by PAF planes were carried out in pairs, attacking in parallel and not one behind the other. Experience had taught these men that going into an attack this way, they were less likely of being hit by ground fire.

Unlike the military command in Moçambique and Angola, General Spínola is faced with few aerial supply problems in Guinea, mainly because of the size of his tiny province. He had two Noratlas transporters which did the bulk of the heavy work and which were sufficient to cover the needs of the territory. What could not be taken in by land or river, these two bulky freighters would fly in to some pretty rugged strips cut out of the bush. Occasionally supplies were dropped to some of the more isolated camps by parachute, but then only when ground fire was too heavy and consistent to take a chance of landing. While the PAIGC would not fire on fighter aircraft they considered the slow-moving transport planes and helicopters fair game.

Of all Lisbon's military zones in Africa, there are more helicopters stationed at Bissau's Bissalanca Airport than at any other Portuguese airfield on the continent. General Spínola has about a dozen Alouette 11s and 111s at ready call day and night. Passengers flying through Guinea on commercial flights will see the shapely, brown-camouflaged craft lined up in a neat row at the far side of the military complex, adjacent to the G-91 jets.

The vital role these craft have played in Spínola's war has prompted

more than one critic of his methods to claim that there is evidence of American involvement in the dispute with the PAIGC. It is true that Spínola did spend some time in the United States shortly before he took up his Bissau appointment. The man, it is said, in whose company he was seen most often was none other than General William Westmoreland, who is a strong exponent of using helicopters to full tactical advantage in difficult terrain. Both men lay heavy emphasis on the attack and air support role of the helicopter under guerrilla conditions. The only difference is that the United States has unlimited supplies of war machines. Spínola regards it as a major catastrophe if he loses a single aircraft in an operation or an accident.

While there are always one or two helicopters on standby for casualty evacuation purposes, the bulk of these craft at Bissau are on ready call for support operations in the interior, either airlifting troops to support infantry patrols which have come in conflict with the rebels or offering covering rocket or machine gunfire for Portuguese units that have made contact but have been unable to contain the enemy.

The Alouettes are rarely idle. Barely a day goes by without all the operational craft being sent out at one time or another. It was a regular complaint--and I had heard it often before in Angola and Moçambique--with more helicopters the Portuguese would be able to bring the war to finality within a year. This state of affairs was hardly eased when a dozen new helicopters, including a number of new Sud Aviation 330 Pumas, were destroyed in a brilliantly-executed night sabotage raid by the Portuguese Maoist underground opposition organisation ARA (Accao Revolucionarea Armada) at the Tancos airbase about 90 miles north of Lisbon, early in 1971. I was in Lisbon at the time, and I could see that the raid severely affected the morale of the fighting man.

"The ideal would be to have a dozen Alouette 111s or three Pumas on standby which we could use in a single operation at a time. That way we could encircle any enemy concentration as and when we find them and wipe them out. No force could counter that kind of mobility." The comment came from another young pilot whom I met in the Ready Room at Bissalanca, Sergeant Alphonso Mateus. Like Carvalho, he was a conscript and had been flying "choppers," as he called them, in appropriate American slang, for two and a half years. He had a job with a commercial helicopter company waiting for him on demobilisation.

He explained that the nature of the country--the jungle and the swamp--

made things as difficult for the enemy as it did for the Portuguese. The only difference was that his compatriots could call on air support while the PAIGC and FLING could not. The trouble was, he ventured, that the most that could ever be spared for a single operation was three craft and, on really special occasions, four. "But that means only about 20 additional men, and that's not enough in a country where a man can creep in between the lianas or a mangrove root and you won't see him even if you pass within touching distance of him." His ideal was a fleet of helicopters working in conjunction with troops and tracker dogs.

Sergeant Mateus explained that even with helicopters it was not all that easy just to go in blindly when enemy contact had been made. If they hovered over one position too long they provided the enemy with an ideal target. Even though most of the craft had been fitted with self-sealing tanks, there was always the chance that a ground salvo could hit the hydraulic mechanism and bring the machine crashing down. Helicopters also suffered the disadvantage of their slow speed. They could be heard coming for miles, and when PAIGC commanders heard them approaching they would invariably break off an engagement and disappear into the jungle. It was generally found, Mateus declared, that "choppers" should not be used at the beginning of an operation when information about the enemy was still vague. "Rather they should be kept in reserve for effective back-up action while the ground commanders verified and augmented information about the PAIGC leaders' intentions, strength, and withdrawal routes."

Once definite contact had been made by the government forces, then the Alouettes could creep in from behind and land troops in the rear of the guerrillas in a bid to hold them in a cross-fire. Even then these aircraft were highly vulnerable, especially during the approach and landing; more so where the terrain was difficult and overgrown with bush. Sergeant Mateus maintained that this tactic was one they had learnt from the French campaign in Algeria. It applied equally well in black Africa, he said.

XIII

WEAPONS OF WAR

Guerrilla action on its own cannot win wars. This fact must never be forgotten. Only by combining units into larger units, by creating an organisation, by inculcating discipline, in a word, by turning groups into armies, can the necessary avalanche of military force be built.

Mao Tse-tung

With more than a decade of African war behind it, most cognoscenti are surprised that diminutive Portugal, with a population of barely nine million, has been able to hold out for so long in a series of protracted colonial guerrilla wars. One of these, in Angola, has already lasted longer than France's Algerian ordeal or Britain's police action against the Mau Mau in Kenya. And not only are these struggles being waged in regions remote from its shores, but each of the three African theatres is again subdivided into different fronts. There are eight altogether.

In Angola there are three zones of fighting--the Dembos, north of Luanda; in the east, on the Zambian frontier; and in Cabinda. Moçambique's military commander, General Kaulza de Arriaga, has his hands full in an area the size of England on the northern border with Tanzania, and in another area in the northwest around Tete, where the giant Cabora Bassa hydro-electric project is being constructed. In Guinea fighting goes on in two areas, in the south and the north. There is also some guerrilla activity in the east, directed mainly from Koundara, well within the borders of President Sékou Touré's Guinea.

Almost 70 percent of the 218,000 men in Portugal's armed forces are on active service in the African Provinces¹; 55,000 in Angola, 60,000 in Moçambique and about 27,000 in

¹ The Military Balance, 1972-73, Institute for Strategic Studies, London.

Portuguese Guinea. The balance make up the rearguard in the Metropolis as part of Mr. Caetano's contribution to the NATO defences of Europe. Forces serving in Africa include African conscripts and volunteers, variously estimated to number between two-fifths and one-third of the total.

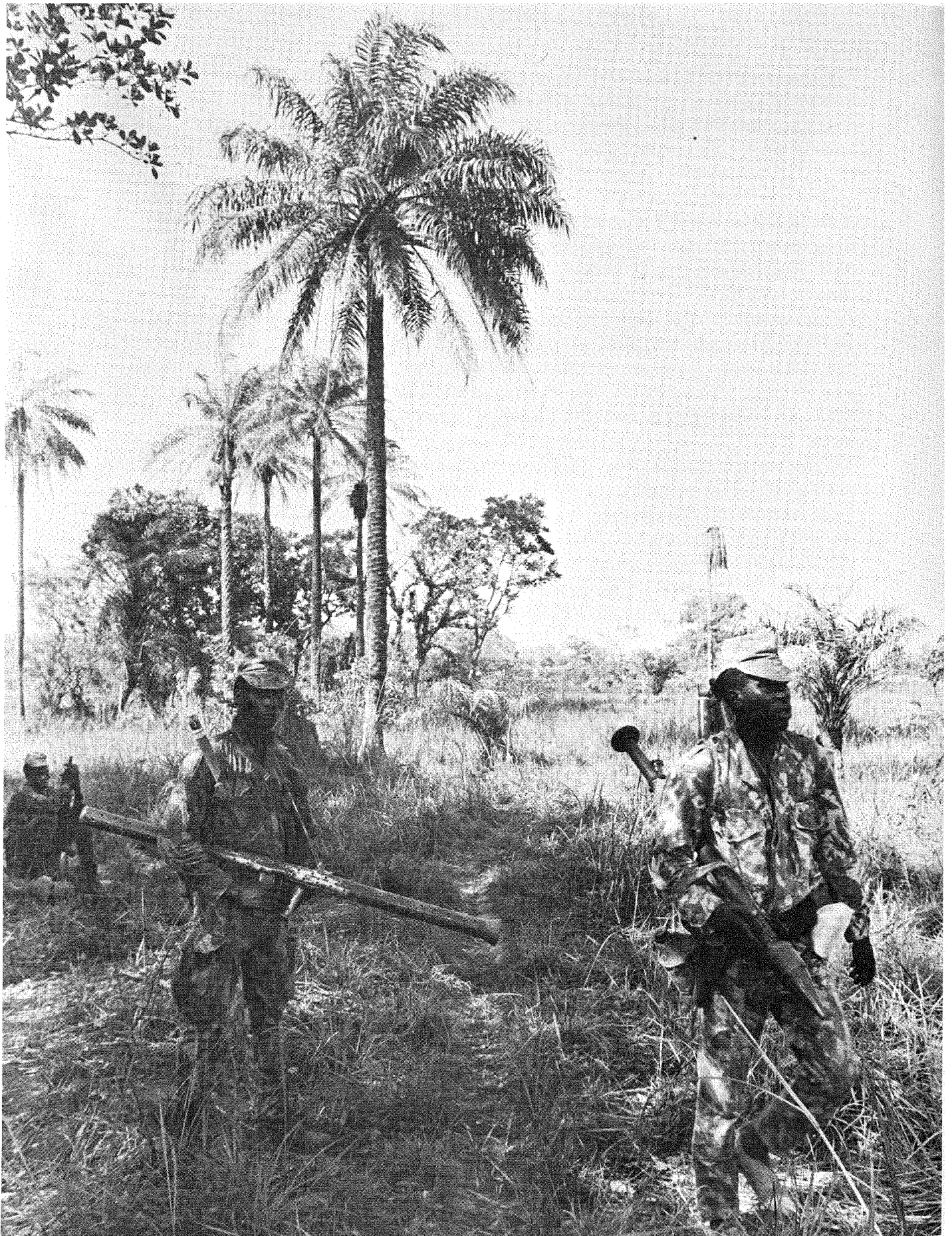
How has Portugal done it? Or better still, how does Lisbon manage to maintain its military and civil presence so effectively on a continent largely dedicated to the eradication of its Luso-tropical tenets and quasi-colonialistic ideals, by force if necessary? More astonishing is the fact that its total defence budget in 1972 totalled \$460 million US dollars. Its defence expenditure as a percentage of the GNP was rated as 6.3 percent in 1971. Neither is it excessive per capita. The figure for Portugal is listed by the Institute for Strategic Studies as \$41 per head.

To the uninformed, Portugal's continued presence in the African war zones is further confused by the fact that Lisbon's adversaries are as well armed on the ground as it is; in many instances the training of its soldiers is matched by the training of the guerrilla forces. They all receive the unstinting moral and material aid from Moscow, Peking, Warsaw, Sofia, Prague, Hanoi, Algiers, Lagos, Havana, and others. It is significant that all these states are also opposed to the western presence in Southeast Asia. But the struggle against Portugal in Africa has reached a stalemate and even now the Organisation of African Unity is asking why.

There are a number of reasons. One of these is that the present government in Portugal is, unlike Britain and France a decade ago, determined to remain in Africa at any cost. Without its African Provinces and their vast natural resources, Portugal would lose considerable status in the eyes of the world, it is argued daily in Lisbon and Oporto. There are opponents of this view, of course, but they are in the minority. With the three Provinces intact, say the Portuguese leaders, the country is able to hold its own socially, economically, and politically in any sphere of international affairs.

There is also the fear that should Lisbon lose control over its African dominions, it would, in effect, become beholden to Spain within a year. The logic and reasoning behind this argument is fatuous, but old traditions die hard, especially where the security of a nation is considered at stake.

No one country can be named as the principal supplier of arms and equipment to Portugal. Much has come from the United States, France,



Two Portuguese troops in the Guinea jungle. The soldier on the left carries a Portuguese-adapted recoilless rifle which uses the Matra 38mm rocket. It has a battery-operated firing mechanism.

and West Germany. But at the same time I saw a variety of equipment from about a dozen other countries in everyday use by Portuguese air, land, and sea forces. During my tour I spotted French helicopters in operational duties against PAIGC guerrillas. German spotter aircraft were used in reconnaissance and support roles. These were backed by Italian-designed Fiat G-91 jet fighters, built in Germany and fitted with British engines, which operated with American PV-2 Harpoon bombers which reached Lisbon through Holland. There were also West German Noratlas transport aircraft which are in general service with the Portuguese Air Force.

On the ground the standard gun used by the Portuguese army is the NATO-type German-designed, 7.62 calibre G-3 rifle. The carbine is an adaptation of the renowned wartime German light assault rifle, the MP44. Officers I was with carried a variety of small arms on their belts, including some of Belgian and Spanish origin. Most commando units were supplied with Spanish Instalaza rifle grenades and French 37mm SNEB rockets adapted for infantry use in a recoilless rifle of Portuguese design.

Vehicles included British Daimler "Dingo" and French Panhard armoured cars as well as South African-manufactured jeeps. These were supplemented by a variety of heavy artillery including 105mm Howitzers with American barrels. In Bissau harbour and other centres the Portuguese Navy and Marine Corps were using every possible type of craft available, including French and British frigates, gunboats, and patrol launches. Other equipment used by the security forces is either obtained abroad or manufactured in Portugal under licence. On one occasion I witnessed a paratroop drop in the south. The guns these men were carrying, I was certain, were Israeli-designed Uzzis, though the officer I was with at the time denied it.

There are other items in this war whose country of origin I was not able to classify. General Spínola has admitted to using defoliants in his war against the PAIGC. Although barren patches of earth could be observed from the air in a number of regions, these were usually restricted to the areas where new roads were being built. The general explained to Peter Hannes Lehmann of Stern magazine that the chemicals were used to clear the bush on either side of new roads for a few hundred yards at a stretch to avoid ambush. Again no one could or would comment on the country of origin.

And there are the napalm bombs I saw stacked at Bissalanca Airport, coded MI/65 and RPX, which do not match either NATO or American

markings. These deadly inflammable bombs could have come from a dozen sources, though reports indicate that Portugal is now manufacturing its own.

There is little doubt that various United States governments, dating back to the immediate post-war period, have played a positive role in arming Lisbon. Since 1951 the basic agreement covering American assistance has been the Mutual Defence Assistance programme (MDA) which provided equipment and the wherewithal under conditions defined in the original NATO treaty. Part of this material was given to Portugal under the auspices of the Marshall Plan. In the ten years ending 1961, America had given Lisbon more than \$500 million in arms, material, and military training under this agreement.

Following the Kennedy era, the flow diminished. Estimates put the total military grants received, between 1961 and 1969, at about \$45 million. Part of this aid included a squadron of antiquated B-26 bombers. Details of the bomber delivery first gained bizarre prominence when a pilot named Hawke was arrested after flying one of the B-26s over the White House. At his trial Hawke admitted having ferried five of the bombers to Lisbon.

According to a report by Robert A. Diamon and David Fouquet, published in the American journal, Africa Report, in May, 1970, America also provides training facilities for Portuguese military personnel. The two men state that up to 1963, a total of 2,288 Portuguese officers and men had passed through American military training establishments. The figure for 1969, they assert, totalled 133. To administer military assistance, sales, and training in the Metropolis, Mr. Nixon maintains a 24-man Military Assistance Advisory Group in and around Lisbon. With these facts in mind, the report that General Spínola had spent some time in the United States with General Westmoreland may not be apocryphal after all.

What has Lisbon done to deserve this aid? Basically, the entire programme centres on the Santa Maria air-sea base in the Azores, a strip of volcanic real estate in the mid-Atlantic which is part of the American strategic supply-line to Europe. Up to 1960, the United States had invested well in excess of \$150 million in the Lajes Azores base. In the last deal, concluded in December, 1971, America has agreed to grant Portugal more than \$400 million in aid for use of the Santa Maria facility. Much of this is bound to come in the form of military assistance.

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The weapon most favoured by the PAIGC is still the tried and trusted Kalashnikov, also known in military jargon as the "Kala," and used by insurgents throughout Southeast Asia and in a dozen guerrilla wars in Africa, the Middle East, and South America. Undoubtedly the 7.62mm AK-47 or Avtomat Kalashnikov, which fires the Soviet M43 round, is regarded as one of the top three carbines of its class in the world. With a 30-round magazine and a maximum effective range of 440 yards, it is capable of selective and burst fire. It functions admirably under the worst circumstances. Mud, dust, slush, heat, cold and, more important, weak or defective ammunition has little effect on the working mechanism of the gun. This is more than can be said for the current NATO favourite, the FN 7.62mm rifle, or the G-3 used by the Portuguese armed forces. Moreover, although the "Kala" is heavier than the NATO 7.62mm and the American M16 5.56mm rifles, it is short and is, therefore, a useful weapon under jungle conditions. Guerrillas also prefer it because the AK-47 can be used like a submachine gun when required.

Other weapons used in quantity by the PAIGC include the Chinese Type 56, the standard individual infantry weapon in the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). This gun is a copy of the Soviet AK-47 and would be classified as an assault rifle by U.S. standards. Like the "Kala" it fires a 7.62 bullet and its effective range is about 400 yards. It is fed by a 30-round, curved-box magazine.

The submachine gun range is well stocked and includes two Russian versions of the PPsh submachine gun; the PPsh-41, holding a magazine of 71 rounds, and the PPS-43. This weapon, with a circular magazine, which made it look like something out of the American Prohibition period, was known as the "burp" gun and was used widely by the Chinese PLA in Korea.

Of the heavier range of weapons, the standard Soviet RPD light machine gun is the most popular. It is similar to the AK-47, except that it is belt-fed and has a bipod mount fixed to the barrel for greater stability, like the British Bren. Also captured in Guinea is the gun which was supplied to Peking in great numbers by Moscow during the entente era of the middle fifties. This is the Soviet Goryunov M1943 7.62 machine gun, which is easily recognised by its heavy metal wheels. This weapon is used by most guerrilla units in Angola and Moçambique and can be adapted for anti-aircraft work.

Another gun, which I saw on exhibition in Bissau and which had been captured in the southern war zone, was the formidable 12.7mm Degtyrev Shpagin 1938/46--a weapon that had distinguished itself in the seige of Leningrad against Hitler's Luftwaffe. Like the Goryunov, it has steel wheels, making it a cumbersome cargo in the kind of country the PAIGC are forced to traverse in order to reach forward positions. It is all the more commendable that the guerrilla forces were able to manhandle this awkward and bulky machine across country where even walking with a rifle is difficult and at times dangerous.

Recoilless rifles have been a feature of African guerrilla armies during the past five years and the PAIGC has not been outdone by forces in other regions. A regular favourite is the Chinese 75mm type 52, which is an exact copy of America's M-20 75mm recoilless rifle. The Chinese version is mounted on a tripod and, like the type 56 submachine gun, is widely distributed through the PLA. Soviet-supplied S/R B.10 82mm recoilless rifles have also been seized by Spinola's forces.

A feature of the war in Portuguese Guinea is the number of infantry anti-tank weapons in use by the insurgents. This is unusual, because the country is hardly suited for the effective use of armoured vehicles except in the vicinity of Portuguese camps and villages. I personally saw few, although they were kept in reserve, I was told. Soviet RPG-2 anti-tank launchers are among ordnance used by every bi-group in the country. As with the Spanish Instalaza rocket grenade used by Bacar's patrol, the weapon is part of every patrol's fire power, indicating a swing away from rifle concept in conventional warfare to destructive power where infantry patrols are concerned. Although I did not see any RPG-6 heat grenades, the Portuguese commanders said these weapons were used by the PAIGC on occasion. This device is capable of piercing up to 4 inches of armour.

Certainly the most effective weapon used by either side in Guinea is the land mine--with both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle configurations. The PAIGC uses a variety of these bombs. Some are hung on trees, others placed in bushes, but most, like the "Bouncing Betty," with its three protruding prongs, are buried in the ground.

The most popular mine in the range is the box mine which is composed of a small wooden container with a hinged lid and a triggering device. The box is buried in the sand in the path along which a patrol is expected. About eight inches long and five inches across, it contains two or three pounds of TNT. The bomb is laid under a covering of

soil with the lid slightly ajar. Pressure from above triggers the explosion. Like most anti-personnel devices, its object is not to kill but to maim; the Vietcong and the PAIGC maintain that more is achieved by crippling a man than killing him, because it takes two or three more of his buddies to attend to the casualty and bring him to safety. What frightens most of the young men in both armies is that the victim does not only lose one or both legs, but everything between them as well.

When a box mine is used against vehicles, an additional charge of 10 or 12 pounds of explosive is buried beneath the container. This combination is sufficient to blast a medium-sized truck or troop carrier to scrap. Because there are no metal attachments on the mine, it is impossible to detect this device with electronic gear. Here the Portuguese pica is the most effective counter-weapon. The advantage of this simple, hand-made mine is that it is light and can easily be manufactured by semi-skilled workers and transported and laid at will on rough ground.

But there are variations in this deadly theme and a number have been borrowed from Indo-China. One of these is the Russian M-14 anti-personnel "toe-popper" as it is aptly called by the Americans--so named because it will take a hunk out of an infantryman's foot if he steps on it. In the correct position an M-14 can kill.

Then there are the Soviet TMB and Chinese anti-tank mines which, although designed to detonate only under heavy pressure, have been known to go off when walked over. This blast usually kills everything within a ten-yard radius. Another development is China's answer to Uncle Sam's Claymore mine, a convex-faced directional-fragmentation bomb which is aimed at the target--an approaching patrol or a truck--and detonated at will, electronically, by one of the enemy lurking nearby. The damage is caused by about 600 steel fragments embedded in a matrix and backed by an explosive charge--TNT or Petnam. The effect, it is said, is equivalent to a 12-bore shotgun fired at close range. The results are devastating. Recently a refinement has been added. In the past, shrapnel could always be detected in the bodies of casualties by x-ray. Now this has been circumvented by using a plastic fragment which causes the same havoc but cannot be detected by radiation.

Still more intriguing is the rare use of a 250-pound aerial bomb on tarred stretches of highway. PAIGC soldiers have in the past spent considerable time and effort tunneling under a road and placing the



Cache of guerrilla arms discovered in north near Senegalese border. Note Chinese RPG2 rocket heads and containers.

bomb carefully in the middle of the highway. Again a trip-wire is stretched across the route so that the first vehicle across will slip the pin from the grenade detonator. The bomb explodes four seconds later, usually in the middle of the convoy. Although success can always be counted by the number of trucks and jeeps destroyed, PAIGC's tenuous supply lines do not offer that much opportunity for the widespread use of these heavy bombs except in areas adjacent to the border where they can easily be brought across at night.

A new device made the scene in Portugal's war zones not long ago. Although used effectively only once in Moçambique so far, its presence indicates further Vietcong involvement in a struggle which promises extended international participation in the future. The lethal newcomer is known to the Americans and Australians as the CACK, or corrosive action car killer, and consists of nothing more than a grenade and a rubber band. The pin of the grenade is extracted and its spoon held in place by a strong rubber band. This is then surreptitiously dropped into the fuel tank of some notable target by a civilian or child attached to the guerrilla band. The corrosive action of petrol eats away at the rubber, until about a week later the final strands of rubber are worn through, and whomp! God willing, the target is in the car when it goes up in a brilliant display of pyrotechnics.

So far the war in Portuguese Guinea has been limited to smaller, lighter weapons. But with the entry of Nigeria into the fray, conditions have changed somewhat. With General Gowon's help, the PAIGC is now able to use a number of heavy weapons which first appeared on the African scene during the Biafran war. This includes Russian-supplied 122mm M1931/7 guns, which were used against General Ojukwu's forces during the final six months of the war. Their 13-mile range makes these large guns ideal for hitting at Portuguese targets from well within Guinean or Senegalese territory. The penetration of these weapons, also of World War 2 vintage, is listed as being capable of piercing armour 6.5 inches thick.

Other heavy weapons which the USSR is known to have supplied to African guerrilla movements include 57mm M1943 anti-tank guns and the 37mm M1939 anti-aircraft guns which resemble the British Bofors. There are also a variety of mortars of which the Soviet 82mm and 120mm M1943 predominate. Chinese versions of these weapons have also been captured in action, but the Portuguese are not impressed with the Chinese 120mm "rocket," as they call it. Most of these, they say, are of inferior quality. Almost every Chinese-made salvo

fired at Portuguese camps has fallen short or wide of the mark because the propellant tended to melt and distend the rear of the metal cannister. I saw the remains of one of these rockets at Sare Bacar. Of the dozen-odd holes at the rear of the shell through which the rocket is propelled, four had fused together because the metal had not been able to withstand the temperature generated in flight, a distance of about four miles.

Grenades come in a variety of shapes and sizes, ranging from the ever-popular Russian RG-42 offensive grenade with a heavy blast but very light fragmentation effect to the F-1 which most resembles the old Mills bomb or the U.S. Mark 2 fragmentation grenade. The F-1 has more serrations and packs a larger explosive charge.

Chinese stick grenades--also known as the "potato masher" of the type used by the Germans and by the Chinese in Korea--have been found in Moçambique and Angola. I was not able to ascertain whether the PAIGC had them. The fragmentation effect of these grenades, I am informed, is limited, and one source indicated that about 25 percent of the Chinese versions are duds.

I found the Portuguese grenade--manufactured in Lisbon--the most functional of all those I have handled. Tubular and cut off sharp at both ends, it can be used either as a blast or fragmentation bomb. In the latter case a removable high-tensile spring is wound round the grenade. On exploding, the steel disintegrates into thousands of tiny fragments, causing terrible damage. Without the spring the Portuguese grenade is lethal within a range of five yards. It is often used to clear the bush immediately around a vehicle during an ambush, in case guerrillas are lurking nearby with long knives, as has been the case in Angola in the past.

Clearly, while Portugal draws on the west for material and technical support and know-how, Russia supplies the bulk of the PAIGC's military needs with a fair amount of Chinese equipment filtering through from other sources, mainly via Algeria. There has also been some Cuban equipment captured. The most notable contribution from Fidel Castro has been the Cuban LGF 89mm bazooka. Cuban material, I was told authoritatively by a Portuguese intelligence source, is of a poor standard and the PAIGC generally prefer the more reliable Russian offerings. They should know.

XIV

THE GENERAL

Mao's writings are gospel to the student of unconventional warfare. What Lenin did on the subject of imperialism and Marx on capitalism, Mao has done for anti-industrial warfare. That is why an understanding of Mao's military philosophy may be of rather more than casual interest.

Dr. E. L. Katzenbach, former
U. S. Deputy Assistant Secretary
of Defence

"You ask whether a military victory is possible for the Portuguese in this Province? I say to you we are already achieving victory with our forces in that we are guaranteeing and underwriting the security of the Guinean people. This is not only a military struggle, it is a political and ideological confrontation. It is also a war that manifestly involves the forces of East and West for the domination of the South Atlantic and West Africa as a whole. In this Guinea plays a crucial role. Why else would the Russians be so committed to helping the PAIGC?

"But we believe we are gradually winning over the sons and daughters of Guinea for the simple reason that the PAIGC rebels are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit new members among our local population. They are having to resort to kidnapping, terrorism, and in some instances murder to make their presence felt. And when they do this the people of the tabancas and the towns come to us for help. We give it gladly."

The man talking was General Antonio de Spínola, the 61-year-old governor and commander-in-chief of Portuguese Guinea. Speaking through an interpreter--Captain Saraiva "Otello" de Carvalho, the man who had replaced Major Rui Alcada as my aide and go-between--the monocled military veteran discussed various aspects of the war with me on the day before I was scheduled to depart for Lisbon. For almost three weeks I had traversed his country from end to end, seen most of the war fronts,

spoken to everyone I had come into contact with, and generally been allowed to form my own impressions of a military campaign which promises to become the guerrilla hot-spot in Africa over the next two or three years.

Once the interview had been arranged I was asked to provide the general with a list of additional written questions. These I handed to Captain Carvalho. In due course I received written answers in Portuguese and English.

I was taken to the Governor's palace by army jeep. It was a large, imposing, whitewashed structure in the centre of Bissau overlooking a square where the annual cultural and agricultural Feria was being held. Two sentries armed with submachine guns raised their weapons to shoulder height in the standard Portuguese salute as we passed. After ascending a flight of stairs, we went through a pair of doors, across a marble patio, and made our way to a clearance area which adjoins the offices of General Spinola's two secretaries, one for civilian matters and the other dealing with war affairs. This portion of the block was air conditioned, a refreshing change from the humidity outside. There was a regular transit of civil and military visitors through the waiting room. We were the only ones waiting to see the general.

Unlike other Portuguese commanders-in-chief in Africa, Carvalho explained, the general made a point of seeing all journalists who wished to interview him. A week before he had received the two German newsmen from Stern magazine. A fortnight before that it had been Jim Hoagland of the Washington Post who called.

General Spinola was on a long distance call to Lisbon when we entered his cavernous, plushly decorated office in one of the wings of the building. Facing us as we walked in was a large gilt-edged portrait of Admiral Americo Tomaz, President of Portugal. The pennants of all battalions that had served or were serving in the country lined the top of a cupboard overlooking the general's desk, arranged in three neat ordered rows, one behind the other. An imposing cut-glass chandelier hung from the ceiling in the centre of the room.

There was no air conditioning. "The general does not like it," I had been warned earlier by one of the secretaries. Walking from their offices to the general's was like entering a tepid oven. A musty odour that is as much a part of the tropics as the green moss which clung to some of the outside walls pervaded from two or three bookshelves to our right.

The general indicated with his hand that we should sit. He continued with his discussion. Carvalho busied himself with his notes. The captain was nervous though he did not immediately show it. He had warned me that he would be, as the general became irritable if he was misconstrued or the discussion bungled. Although Carvalho spoke good English--he was married to a New Zealander--their home language was Portuguese, and it was not often that he came into contact with the English-speaking world. He had been married for nine years and his wife spoke Portuguese fluently, so there was little need or opportunity for practice.

We settled ourselves in a heavy green velvet lounge suite fringed with silk tassels held by green studs. It was drawn up around a beautiful Louis XIV coffee table. A period writing table and lampstand covered with books and papers stood immediately against the wall to our right. The man had taste, though with the equally imposing full length velvet curtains which were draped from the ceiling, the decor was perhaps a little overdone.

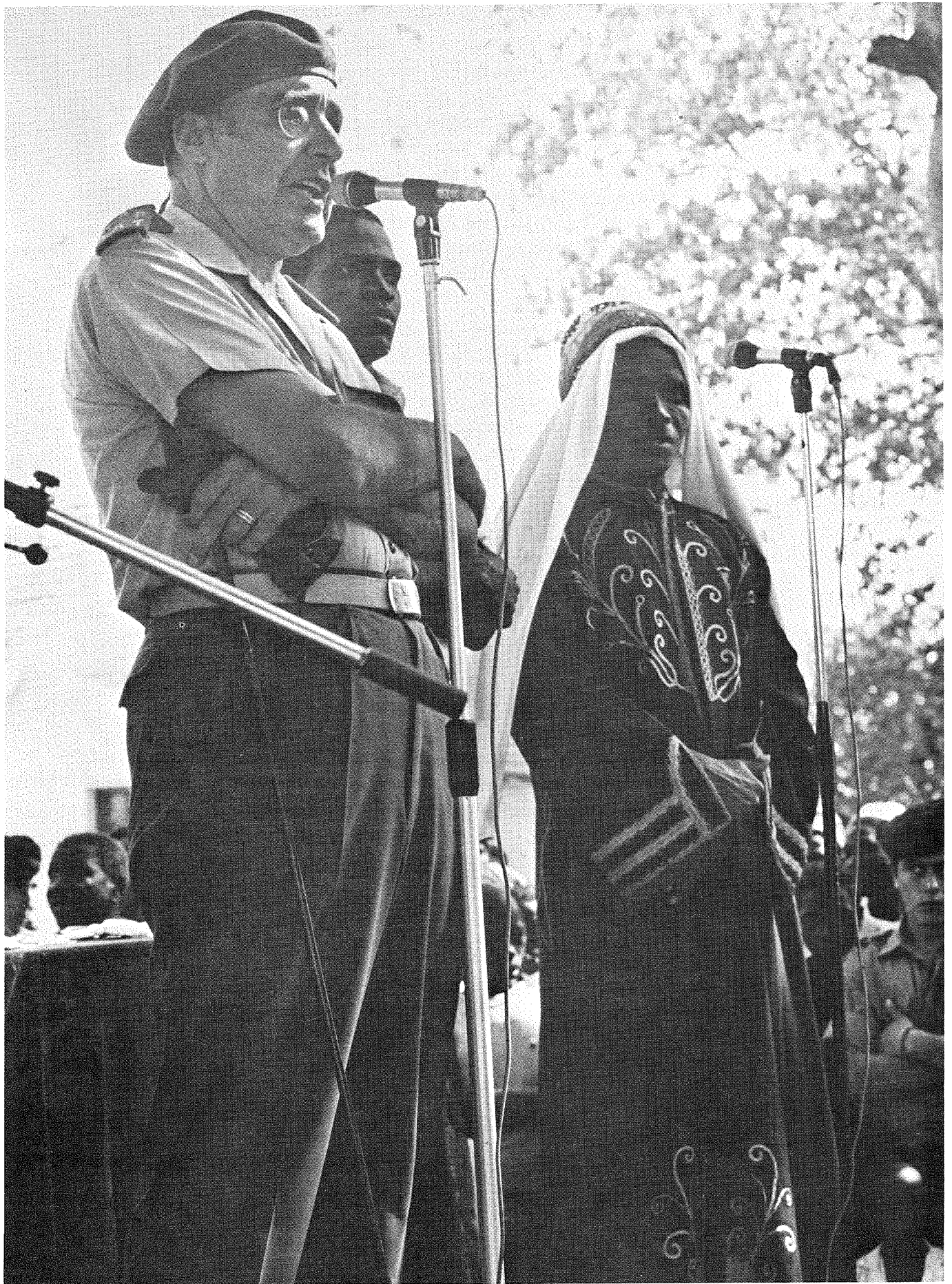
General Spínola finished speaking and came over to join us. His smile was austere, like the rest of him, but he shook my hand warmly. He wore the same uniform I had seen him in when he had visited Tite--short sleeved, open-neck khaki shirt and a darker pair of regulation army officer trousers. For once he left his leather gloves on the desk together with the riding whip which he usually carried. "I trust you have had a pleasant stay. Do you have any complaints?"

It was a forthright start to our discussions and it cleared away any doubts I might have had: I was dealing with a man of substance. I had been told that he could spare me an hour. I stayed two.

I asked him first about the significance of the Cape Verde Islands and how he construed Cabral's incorporation of the ten islands within the scope of the guerrilla struggle.

He answered: "You must realise from the start that the war you have seen here has far wider implications than a simple conventional African guerrilla struggle. The Cape Verde Islands are quite indispensable to Russia for the domination of the South Atlantic and the Cape sea route which is one of the busiest maritime lanes in the world. Europe is dependent on this route for much of its oil from the Middle East and all its trade with countries like India, Australia, and Southeast Asia. If that were cut, the Panama Canal could not hold the additional flow.

"Possession of the islands would allow the Soviet Union to control



General Spinoła and an African leader share a platform. A translator stands between them.

communications from Africa to Europe and America. For this reason the war in our Guinea must be seen not only as a springboard for the conquest of the Cape Verde Islands, but also as a beach-head for Soviet penetration into the western half of this vast continent. Remember they [the Russians] are active too on the Indian Ocean and in countries like Tanzania, Somalia, and Aden [People's Republic of South Yemen]. If you bring Egypt into the picture, you can see why I consider this as all part of a giant master plan for the complete encirclement of Africa by the Eastern bloc, and I am not alone in these sentiments.

"But far more important to us Portuguese is the fact that if we were to collapse here, it would not only endanger the morale in Angola and Moçambique but also result in an intensification of the military struggle in southern Africa which could eventually lead to a gigantic racial blood bath. And do not be fooled by sentiment. There are people who would like to see such a blood bath."

Were the Russians actively participating in the war? I queried.

"No," he answered quickly without waiting for Carvalho to translate, which fortified my suspicion that he could understand English perfectly well but used a translator either to give him time to formulate his reply, or, if his answers were misreported, he could use the excuse that misconstruction during translation was at fault.

"I know that some of their journalists have visited PAIGC bases in Guinea, but that is all. The bulk of the weapons used by the PAIGC is Russian and many of PAIGC's propaganda booklets are printed in the Soviet Union as they are in China and North Vietnam." He said there was also new evidence which indicated that Yugoslavian guerrilla specialists and medical personnel were working closely with the PAIGC, as were the Cubans, the Algerians, and Nigerians. "The Cubans are particularly well suited to the war against Portugal because of the affinity of the Spanish and Portuguese languages."

I then touched on a subject which I had discussed with a number of senior staff officers in the enclave concerning the Moslem Fula community. Was he not afraid that these people who had been loyal to Portugal so far would one day turn against the Portuguese? After all, I elaborated, the two cultures had little in common--the one was devoutly Roman Catholic and white, the other often passionately Islamic and black. The Fulas were closely related to the Fulani Kingdom in Nigeria and tribal ties were often as strong as blood ties. As Lagos

was at the vanguard of the anti-Portuguese movement in Africa, surely this animosity must seep through at some stage or another, if only when leading members of the local Fula community go on their annual pilgrimages to Mecca where they were bound to come into close contact with radical Moslem elements?

General Spínola answered after a long pause. Sentence by sentence Carvalho translated what he had to say.

"Let us be clear about one thing. The Moslems are our strongest allies in this war. But I do not believe that makes them a potential enemy. We are Catholic, yes, but so are some of PAIGC's best men, so your argument cuts no ice. Certainly Islam has expanded in Africa and has assimilated a new militancy which was not there 20 years ago, but it is an alive religion, impregnated with a profound humane feeling for the fellowman. It is a religion accessible to everyone; it is of a universal character like Christianity. Therefore, I cannot agree with you that the growth of Islam can be coupled with some continent-wide political-economic expansion. The number of Moslems in this country who have been decorated for bravery for defending and fighting for their own ground is proof enough that there is nothing to fear. This I firmly believe."

We went off on another tack. I asked the general what would happen if, as a result of continuing unstable economic development, Sékou Touré's Guinea or Senegal launched a full scale military invasion of Portuguese Guinea, as the Indians had done with Goa in the early sixties. The Goan invasion could be construed as a successful precedent in certain quarters.

"The liberty which the terrorist movement enjoys in the bordering states--the Guinea Republic and Senegal--constitutes a provocation, certainly. We have not responded, mainly because of the respect we have for the standard rules which govern the relations between sovereign states. We know and the PAIGC knows that this war will end when these neighbouring states remove this liberty and the presence of the rebels is substituted by a powerful control mechanism some distance from our borders. But if the bordering states were to reach the point of declaring total aggression, then we would have no other alternative but to choose a solution by the legitimate imperative of defence. Let us hope that there is still enough sense prevailing to avoid that extreme situation. And if it happens it could only be construed as a decisive blow for the prestige of the PAIGC as a guerrilla organisation, not only internally, but internationally. Moreover, Senegal, like the Republic of Guinea, as well as the guerrillas themselves already have sufficient problems on their side without undertaking an aggression of such a nature."

On the question of Soviet Migs overflying Portuguese Guinea territory, General Spinola would only say that this move has "given cause for my Government to take a stand. I do not think it necessary to add anything else to the subject."

During our talk General Spinola was interrupted twice more by calls from Lisbon. I gathered he had a direct line with the capital and that there were regular calls between the Supreme Command and Bissau.

Captain "Otello" Carvalho and I left the office together with General Spinola when we had finished our talk. I was returned to my hotel. The general went on to his nightly meeting at the operations centre where his staff officers were waiting for him to review the day's events. I left with the list of my questions that had been prepared beforehand, and General Spinola's answers. These I reproduce in toto for they are a reflection of the man's aims, his logic, and his country's intentions for the future. The document elucidates a number of historical and contemporary factors not previously dealt with.

Q: WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER ARE THE ORIGINS OF GUERRILLA SUBVERSION IN AFRICA?

A: The last war ended with the triumph of a political and social ideology which, under the guise of humanity and respect for the individual human's rights, was based on political premises deliberately extended to a mankind that, because of its cultural heterogeneity, cannot naturally assimilate it.

On the other hand, the natural tendency to seek legitimacy for unjust ambitions placed this ideology in the service of imperialisms, which is extremely easy when inculcated in under-developed peoples, for whom it becomes a factor in the disintegration of traditional societies, because they do not understand it.

The cease-fire in Europe in 1946 took place in this atmosphere of a psychological clash of political and social maladjustments. So that we may readily conclude that in fact the last World War has not yet ended. The Nuremberg trials simply marked the beginning of a new phase in that war, considered in its world-wide sense.

The remarkable progress and social upheavals that have arisen from the last war have led to the appearance of major consumer societies which seek to open up new markets at all costs, creating spheres of influence

outside their own frontiers. Thus the specific problems of each country have been generalized, gathering about them forces attracted magnetically to the major political and economic seats of power. This has led to the growth of spheres of influence in which the stronger have progressively dominated the weaker until two opposing blocs have been set up, the East and the West.

In this confrontation between two vast world-scale forces, we see the development of a new strategy which makes use of extremely subtle forms of indirect action and relegates to a secondary plane the classic strategy, left far behind since the end of the 1939-45 war.

In general terms we can say that classic strategy sought the best means of achieving national objectives through four classic instruments of the political power of states: economy, propaganda, diplomacy, and military might. The development of technology and the growth of the communications media have given the two blocs similar resources in the spheres of economy, propaganda, and diplomacy. The appearance of nuclear weapons has completely altered the principle of the use of military might, which is merely maintained as a dissuasive instrument.

Thus, faced with the threat of total destruction and dread of the consequences of war, and given the balance of might between the two blocs, the East has instituted a new strategy, adding a new element to the four classic weapons of political power: ideological penetration and revolutionary subversion.

Possession of this fifth force has enabled the East to transfer its strategic effort to the "home front" of the great human masses. This new strategy has become the best manner in which states can continue to attain their aims without making use of classical warfare. War has thus moved from the field of arms to the sphere of ideas, to the ideology of the mobilization of the masses or, more precisely, to the field of social claims, and now takes the form of internal conflicts, that is, national wars with international intentions.

This subversive-revolutionary strategy has been conceived by the Eastern bloc to provoke the self-destruction of the West, against which the latter sets a classic strategy, deplorably confusing dissuasion with defence. NATO, set up as a dissuader, has become the West defence force and attracts, as an instrument of defence, the attention of those who ingenuously thought they were being defended by NATO, for the simple reason that we are not being attacked in that sphere.

We are in fact faced with the implementation of the old Trotskyite

intention "to destroy the West with something that the West will not understand" or, as Bukarin stated, "to rot the enemies of the Soviet Union sufficiently to gain the victory over them without the Red Army being called on to fire a single shot outside its own frontiers."

The West has not paid due attention to the clever corollary of Clausewitz's definition of war: "If war is the continuation of politics, using other means, politics also is the continuation of war through other means."

Against these realities the West has established NATO with its heavy divisions and rockets. But it is clear that we can only win a war with weapons like those of, or adapted to, the enemy. As regards the great Soviet offensive, we must realize, however much it shocks us, that we can only overcome the "revolution of the masses" through the "revolution of the masses." It shocks us because the West is cozily locked up within an irresponsible conservatism and does not enjoy sufficient breadth of view and flexibility to conceive the anti-reactionary counter-offensive, the only weapon that can effectively defend the values of Western civilization.

Faced with such different concepts, the Western strategy is of necessity out-dated, as the history of the last few years has abundantly demonstrated. We must develop and oppose an effective counter-revolution to face the revolution, thus combating ideas with ideas.

Otherwise the West, stagnating and restricted to its classic concepts, will die, stifled by the so-called "world revolution of the common people" that has gained such youthful support. We must thus go out to meet the ordinary folk and young people and carry out, within our own culture, the revolution which, if not performed by us, will inevitably be brought about, but within a different culture.

Q: HOW DO YOU SEE PORTUGUESE AFRICA IN THE WORLD CONTEXT?

A: In the context of Marxist strategy the final objective is the isolation of the United States of America by the conquest of Europe and Africa. This is a familiar plan, in which the immediate clear-cut aim is the economic paralysis of Europe by cutting off its access to the sources of raw materials and by suppressing its markets, isolating the Mediterranean, and binding the African market to the socialist bloc. Once the European economy is paralysed, America would be isolated and thus its economy would begin to deteriorate, which would in its turn lead to social crisis, the class struggle, the proletarian revolution,

and, finally, collapse.

Clearly Africa occupies a key position in this master plan, not only in the immediate phase of cutting off Europe but also with a direct influence on the subsequent isolation of the U.S. Thus the imperative need of Eastern strategy is to isolate Africa from the Western world. Isolating implies cutting off relations with the European homelands, giving independence to states that are not politically ready for it, with the sole aim of bringing about "economic chaos," a necessary condition of social deterioration to provide an opening for Eastern influence.

To implement this thesis it has been no trouble to set up a false humanitarian ideology, widely accepted in the post-war comfort-loving world, and it has proved even easier to win over the African elites and suggest that they should take over from the white elites. Thus there came about a wave of "independent African countries," followed by the present clash of interests of a world which, if the West continues to slumber, is moving irrevocably towards domination by the Eastern bloc.

At present, to the world's astonishment, Portuguese Africa is the only connecting political link between Africa and Europe. The opposing blocs have never been able to understand how "the little Portuguese nation" has been able to put up resistance to the vast Eastern plan of expansion. That is, in one way or another, the problem would always have arisen, in whatever way we had acted in Africa. There is no motive, therefore, for the generalized guilt complex that affects many consciences in our homeland. We must pose the problems of our overseas territories within the world-wide context in which they are placed. Thus, we cannot isolate them as the fundamental problems of the survival of the West and even more, the survival of our nation.

Q: WHAT ARE THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS OF THE GUINEA PROBLEM IN YOUR VIEW?

A: Before the war there was no social conflict in our Guinea. There was no agricultural proletariat, ethnic groups were culturally self-sufficient, and the administration guaranteed balance among native institutions. From the political point of view the Africans of Guinea were in a state where they did not wish to govern but rather wished to be well governed--that is, to get from their government protection, justice, and economic progress.

African societies are tribalized ones in which the concept of "tribe"

plays the same part as our notion of "Nation." The European presence in Africa is envisaged by the mass of natives as a super-national power which lays down the synthesis of various nations. This aspect can be considered in both a negative and a positive sense. The fact is that the world is traveling towards supranational syntheses, in a convulsive progress, while tribal societies accept them readily, only demanding that they be legitimated by these results: harmony, protection, justice, and progress.

In this context we can thus conclude that guidelines of subversion are fictions. Without a proletariat or contestations, it has proved necessary to create tensions, awakening the "dynamic substratum" which would provide support for subversion. It is true that our errors of administration facilitated the arousal of this substratum through ill-solved inheritance and tribal conflicts, excess of paternalism, too much bureaucracy and routine that made victims who were skilfully exploited by subversion.

On the other hand the Guinea conflict has taken place in the context of the exploitation of three distinct conflicts, which mingle and merge one into the others:

- a. a political war carried on by an elite serving foreign imperialism;
- b. social revolution waged by people who feel socially frustrated and repressed, in search of a better life;
- c. tribal conflicts arising from matters connected with the heirs to native chieftaincies, native village property, family matters, and even questions of personal vengeance, which come to the surface as soon as there is any weakening of the supranational institution constituted by the Government.

The political war gains support from the "dynamic substratum" arising from social revolution and tribal conflicts, so that to repress it by force, as some still advocate, always worsens the "dynamic substratum" which gives it support. With time this substratum is politized--that is, it tends to be identified with the essence of the conflict, which thus acquires a general significance.

It cannot be too often stressed that while the causes of subversion are not internal, it was on the mistakes of the past that the PAIGC based the major guidelines of subversion, which thus appeared to the world

as the result of the inefficiency of our overseas administration, in the attempt to prove the incompetence of our structures. We must recognise that mistakes were made which brought about a psychological climate favourable to the development of subversion, but this does not mean that we are too late to eliminate them. Moreover, when compared with the situation in other African territories, ours is not an extreme one. What does matter is that we must recognise our mistakes openly and fight for their rapid elimination, through intelligent, dynamic action with an eye to building up the future. For this to be so, the first thing is to remove the slackness of structures and the men who serve them.

All the commentators on revolutionary warfare are unanimous in considering lassitude as the basic factor of subversion. "Lassitude" is a neologism that expresses the incidence of routine on the structures of an amorphous society, when faced with urgent needs arising from the necessity of launching a process of readjustment of that society to the social development of a world that is in continuous mutation: clearly lassitude always works to the advantage of subversion. On the other hand, by the very definition of lassitude, the passage of time increases the extent to which the structures are made obsolete by revolutionary structures. As a result victory in subversive warfare calls for the basic requirement of eliminating lassitude.

We must place the problem of Guinea within this framework. As we have already pointed out, it stands at the junction of three conflicts-- political warfare, social revolution, and tribal conflicts--a joint solution for which would give us the key to success.

Q: WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER IS THE SOLUTION OF THE GUINEA PROBLEM?

A: A subversive conflict is won when the incidence of the time factor is inverted--that is, when time begins to work against subversion. This has already been demonstrated, but it should be stressed once more, because it is the starting point for the solution of the problem of Guinea.

Time works against subversion when the political subversion is dissociated from the social dynamic substratum on which it is based, removing this support from the subversive movement and placing it at the service of the counter-subversion. From this we infer that we must oppose subversive social revolution or, in other words, an anti-reactionary counter-revolution. Victory will thus depend on the success

of the social counter-revolution that must be mounted. Otherwise success is not to be hoped for in a war of this nature.

We in Guinea are mounting this social counter-revolution so as to destroy the basic grounds that support the dynamic substratum of the subversion. In this direction we set out to:

- a. interpret and meet the legitimate ambitions of the people;
- b. promote social justice and equality of all citizens before the law;
- c. build up as quickly as possible economic and social progress, seeking to overtake the societies of neighbouring countries.

That is, we are seeking to get the "lassitude factor" to work for us.

But Guinea cannot survive separated from the nation (Portugal) of which it is an integral part. Without staff cadres and the possibility of economic and financial autonomy, Guinea is in fact closely tied to the national structures, from which it can in no way break free. The social counter-revolution that we have to organize thus has effects on the homeland, which must be in a position to give effective support to the social counter-revolution being carried out here in this Province.

To support a social counter-revolution in a developing region implies the setting-up of dynamic, solid, and efficient structures and to meet these needs the homeland (Portugal) is still encumbered with a slow-moving, obsolescent bureaucracy. I could quote innumerable examples of the ineffective operation of structures on the home front, which of course are reflected in the ineffective operation of structures in this Province, which are not ready to meet the urgent needs of our time.

If we wish to operate the social counter-revolution which will ensure our survival as a great nation, we must reform the structures on the home front. I think that in this exposition I have produced sufficient arguments to show quite clearly the undeniable force of this statement. Any such reform will be impossible unless we make a start by reforming consciences. Before we go any further we must make the home front fully aware, awaken it to a real notion of the task to be performed

at this historic moment in our life as a nation.

The features of the Province are particularly favourable to the solution of the problem, and in fact make of it an unparalleled case within the Portuguese territories.

Internally, independently of unarguable national needs, the present strategic significance of Portuguese Guinea in concretizing a realistic national plan cannot be gainsaid. No one can imagine, obviously, that any success of the subversive process in Guinea would not necessarily lead to an irreversible international attitude in supporting the terrorist movements in Angola and Mozambique. On the other hand, the success of counter-subversion in Guinea, with the consequent discredit of the PAIGC, the most consequential terrorist movement in the African continent, must be unfavourably reflected in the development of the subversive process in those two Provinces.

Also within the context of our strategy in Africa we must stress the importance of the group, Guinea-Cape Verde, as a support for communications essential to the development of military operations in southern Africa.

As regards relations with neighbouring countries, we see that their premature accession to independence, lacking the indispensable political structures, an efficient administrative framework and leaders able to carry to a successful conclusion the management of public affairs, has brought them to a critical situation that has led to a considerable fall in the standard of living of their inhabitants when compared with the recent past. This decline contrasts with the benefits that, to a growing extent, are being put at the disposition of the native population of our Province; this contrast will necessarily become a spectacular one after a more sizable improvement in the living conditions of the inhabitants of Guinea, which is no doubt the best argument for the validity of our policy and the failure of that of the new African states.

Geographically Guinea is a very small Province, which facilitates rapid access by any means of transportation to all the points of the territory where military needs or the demands of development make it necessary.

It is common knowledge that the counter-subversion effort that Portugal is maintaining in three African Provinces is largely being met by the human and material resources of the Metropolis which,

as a result, limits the nation's reserves. But in this respect the small size of the Province is in our favour, and it makes solution of the problem of Guinea quite feasible within our own resources.

In the military field, for example, timely significant temporary efforts are viable, as part of maneuvers at the National Defence level. In the development sphere it is possible with relatively small resources to bring about a considerable improvement in the social and economic situation of the Province.

In the human aspect there is manifestly a lack of political awareness among the native population, who are far more interested in meeting their basic needs and their legitimate desires for progress than in the agitated life replete with violence and terror that has been imposed on them by the war. There can thus be no doubt that the fulcrum of the problem is to be sought in the social and economic promotion of the rural population.

Alterations in the habitat of the countryfolk, brought about by the vicissitudes of war, have led to concentration in big towns which can offer better living conditions. Thus especially favourable conditions have been created to transform these new towns into the centres of radiation of social and economic progress, likely to make the population feel more quickly the benefits arising from the policy of promotion that we intend to effect.

The population has been extraordinarily sensitive and receptive to all the programs connected with an improvement in their way of life and at present show confidence and expectation as regards the policy of the administration of the Province.

Generally speaking, the Guineans are fighting to obtain concrete advantages. They want to live a better life in peace and thus the pursuance of this policy of the integral enhancement of the population is a favourable factor making for imbalance, removing it decisively from the subversive process and bringing it progressively closer to the national cause.

As regards the guerrillas, the armed enemy we face in Guinea is a determined man, the result of deep-rooted indoctrination, and there are no material limits to the material means needed for subversion, being able to count on the unconditional support of Russia and the other signatory countries of the Warsaw Pact. It has, moreover, been thoroughly shown that the support of international communism for

the terrorist activities increases according to the movements' needs, so that the enemy will not lack the indispensable support in weapons and money. The only thing is that this military power is not paralleled by the support of the population, which is steadily decreasing, the inhabitants having realized the terrorists' inability to meet their most elementary desires for progress. This being the case it is no wonder that the enemy intensifies its military activity, to divert the fulcrum of the problem to the war plane, in its concern to create a climate of instability which would make it impossible to carry out our policy of promotion and progress.

I think I can conclude that the triumph of the national cause in Guinea is perfectly within our grasp; I do not hesitate to state that this victory will have the widest international repercussions, with strong effects on the rest of the Overseas Provinces, and would put before world opinion the triumph of concepts that at present it doubts the validity of; this would entail a considerable alteration in the international political panorama, with evident influence on the other Overseas Provinces--not to mention the boost to morale that it would give to the homeland, a factor of the highest importance at the present time.

There is thus a solution for the "problem of Guinea" and we are traveling towards it. The basic conditions have been achieved at which it is urgent to act at the local level to permit the implementation of social reforms necessitated by the counter-revolution. We have thus opened up the way to basic solutions. These conditions are the following:

- a. winning the support of the masses for our policy of social justice, giving them confidence in our ability to govern them and to meet their legitimate desires for progress;
- b. carrying out the basic social and economic programs which will guarantee the necessary credibility of our policy;
- c. providing minimum conditions of security which will make the economic and social development of the Province feasible.

At this time we have to work more and more quickly to make the basic solutions a reality. On this work depends the consequence or failure

of the efforts we have been making, but it is a task that is beyond the sphere of the administration of this Province and must be carried out in full on the home front.

Thus in Guinea our future as a great, prosperous African nation, with the widest influence on the world, can be decided.

In my opinion the "problem of Guinea," within the social revolution where it is being processed, will be a test of the Nation's ability to carry through an uninterrupted revolution, without destroying the principles of the civilization of which it is a part. In the last analysis, the question is whether we are capable of attaining the social aims that we have set ourselves. If we are successful, we shall win the battle of peace and shall triumph as a Western, and eminently African, nation, and will serve as an example of social progress in Africa.

THE LAST WORD

The war in Portuguese Guinea has reached its first full decade of military stalemate. It is evident to this observer--and a number of others who have recently toured the war zones--that no immediate conclusion to hostilities is in sight. At this stage even "dialogue" between the opposing factions has barely been mooted.

Peter Webb, of Newsweek, after his visit to the territory, put it this way: "It is hard for a visitor to see any early end to a conflict fueled and supplied from outside, where guerrillas have sanctuary in neighbouring nations and protective terrain that enables them to move easily around the country. But it is harder to see the rebels winning the war in any military sense as long as the Portuguese keep pumping in men and money."

In Guinea, both the Portuguese and the guerrillas maintain they will fight to the last. One Portuguese staff officer with his own views on the subject told me that, while he was still about, the "terrorists would have to kill every man, woman, and child before the enemy is in a position to take over control." Some PAIGC fighters have vowed to do just that.

If the war maintains its present momentum there seems little likelihood that Portugal will be displaced either in the medium- or long-term future. Its presence is effectively maintained from a string of military camps and fortified hamlets which cover the length and breadth of the territory. From these centres General Spínola's forces are in a position to hold sway over the terrain and the local civilian population with the 20 battalions he has based there. His troops come to grips with the enemy--arrayed in about 60 bi-groups at any one time inside the territory--whenever he presents himself.

The fact that the Portuguese rarely venture out at night is of little consequence; most of the damage is done during daylight hours with the air force in ready support. I personally am convinced that the Portuguese soldier would do much more damage if he were a little more active during the dark hours--like the Rhodesians when occasion demands--but then each nation has its own way of fighting this kind of unconventional war.

Because Portuguese Guinea is so small there are no serious logistical

problems for the authorities, or at least nothing on the scale encountered in Angola or Moçambique. Supplies and munitions are brought in daily, if needs be, by river, road, and air. And while the army has what it requires, the rest is left to the individual commanders in the North, South, and East, though General Spínola sets his sights high.

That, basically was the situation when I visited the territory in April, 1971. Portugal was in a position to bide its time. The military and political set up was static and Portugal had the bulk of the civilian population within its sphere of influence.

At that time I was convinced that if change must come, it was more likely to emanate from the guerrillas among whose ranks there has already been some frustration because of the impasse. The last time I saw him General Spínola admitted quite candidly that his position--though difficult at times--was reasonable when the overall picture was viewed, which was more than can be said for his opposite number in Moçambique at present. He added that the longer this state of affairs remained the way it was, the more difficult the task became for the guerrillas. "After all, it's the PAIGC which is trying to effect revolutionary change, not I. I'm all for retaining the status quo in the face of limited military action," he told me.

But change is in the air, both among the PAIGC guerrillas and the Portuguese. The PAIGC is getting more active support from the Government of President Leopold Senghor. This move, which has surprised the west, has been ascribed to a steadily deteriorating economic situation within Senegal. Too much money is being spent on prestige projects instead of concentrating on essentials. On top of this the crop yield in Senegal and most neighbouring states has been abysmally low for two years, creating economic and consequently further political pressures on the central Government. This was exacerbated when neighbouring Gambia decided to increase the ground nut price to \$10 per ton in December, 1971, which led to an increase in smuggling of the crop from Senegal to take advantage of better prices.

There are some who see Senghor's involvement in the Portuguese war as a bid to take the limelight off mass unemployment and rampant inflation, which are bound to become more pronounced with the devaluation of the dollar (America has always been liberal with foreign aid to Senegal).

The situation in President Sékou Touré's Republic of Guinea to the south is worse. Independent since 1958, following its unilateral breakaway from France, economic conditions in this country verge on the chaotic, with even the Russians playing it cool of late. From being a major exporter of tropical fruit, produce, and hardwood in the middle fifties, Guinea today does not have enough food to feed its four million souls. Much of its wheat is imported as grants-in-aid from the Russians and Americans. This kind of aid is regarded in the United States as humanitarian.

Graphically illustrating this state of affairs is the performance of the Guinean government body which handles agricultural exports, Guinexport, a Guinean derivation of Sovexport, the Russian exporting body. Losses accumulated by Guinexport from 1960 to 1968 reached a staggering total of 3,700 million Guinean francs (approximately 1475 FG to the dollar).

On top of this President Touré has arrested just about every single member of his cabinet excepting his brother Ismael Touré, who has stuck by his side through 14 years of mismanagement and disorder. In August, 1971, President Touré admitted to the local Associated Press correspondent that most of his Ministers and high army officers were in jail on charges of plotting to topple his regime. Mr. Touré said that 16 of his Cabinet Ministers in office a year ago, 5 former Ministers, numerous Provincial Governors and senior Government officials, and the "overwhelming majority" of high-ranking army officers were in jail in connection with insurrection. For the fifth time that year, this former post office trade unionist accused "foreign powers" of having tried to overthrow his government. This time, he declared, "certain unnamed foreign imperialists" had spent more than \$27 million to topple his regime and finance a "campaign of slander" against Guinea.

Naturally, he claimed Portugal was heavily involved, as well as West Germany, the United States, Britain, and other western powers.

Meanwhile, 128 political prisoners wait fearfully in damp, dark cells in Conakry for the day when jailers will bring them news of their fate. The 128 (President Touré mentioned the figure in a broadcast to his nation) are all that remain of thousands that have been arrested over the years. Most of the others have been executed.

¹ Africa South of the Sahara, 1971, Europa Publications, London.

That, then, is the position in the two states which border on Portuguese Guinea and which provide succour to the guerrilla organisations operating against the Portuguese.

Clearly the eastern bloc states are active, yet neither country offers in the long term any great rewards. Senegal is a poor nation and costs France a mint each year in foreign aid to keep it viable, while Guinea-Conakry is considered a major economic drain for Moscow. Still, perched at the western tip of Africa, Conakry, the Portuguese and, incidentally, the French maintain, offers the Russians a major naval base for operations in that region of the Atlantic. Should Senegal eventually also go further to the left, it is reckoned by some western strategists, the prize could include Dakar harbour, one of the finest on the continent. With the rail-link from Dakar reaching 700 miles into Mali and the interior of West Africa, the haul would be rich indeed. Already Mali has strong links with the Russians and the Chinese and, with the prospect of completing the evasive triangle the size of half of western Europe, it pays Portugal's enemies to keep up a steady military front against General Spínola's forces. Portuguese Guinea would, therefore, be seen as the catalyst in keeping the region "hot" militarily and politically. If the Portuguese were to withdraw, the need for the Russian presence would, in theory, disappear.

A question often asked of the Portuguese is why they do not retaliate directly against those nations which are providing guerrilla movements with aid, as the Israelis have done in Jordan and the Americans in Cambodia.

"Any move against a sovereign country in the present state of international politics would be suicide," was the reply one Portuguese diplomat in this country gave me. He agreed that it would be comparatively easy to "take" Senegal, or even Guinea, for that matter, with the forces at their disposal. But a long hard look at the implications shows why such a move is not only impractical, but positively dangerous at the present time, although there is more than enough evidence to show that Portugal was involved in the abortive invasion of Conakry in the late 1970s. A positive military move against a neighbouring state by Portugal, it is generally accepted, would immediately bring down the wrath of the United Nations on its head.

With the UN in apparent disarray (it could do nothing about the Indo-Pakistani war), this might seem small fare as compared with the ultimate consequences of destroying a long-standing enemy. But this

is not so. For a start the United Nations could and would impose immediate oil and trade sanctions on the aggressor, especially on a small nation of Portugal's stature which cannot muster a fraction of the votes of, say, Israel in the UN General Assembly. Britain and America might veto such a move in the Security Council in view of their affiliation to NATO (Portugal is also a member), but the motion would then surely be moved to the General Assembly. This body has already shown itself capable of making "binding" resolutions even though the Charter does not make such a provision. General Assembly Resolution 2145 ended South Africa's Mandate in South West Africa (Namibia) and this is accepted as fait accompli by the world body. Because of the legal implications this resolution has lost much of its punch; this would not be so if a neighbouring country were invaded militarily. The odds on a sanction motion receiving a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly are therefore quite positive.

Although UN sanctions would probably be ignored by most of Portugal's western trading partners, pressure would most certainly be brought to bear on those "marginal" states with which trade has been built up over the years--countries in Asia and South America; small countries such as Ireland, New Zealand, Iran (with which Portugal has a substantial oil trade); and outspokenly neutralist countries such as Scandinavia. Even Canada, which plays a very skillful anti-Portuguese role in the UN and other world bodies, would then find justification in publicly boycotting Lisbon.

Trade with these states totalling tens of millions of escudos would immediately be lost. Should the sanctions be lifted again, even in a month, it would take years to build up the good relations that exist at the present time. There would be real trade losses and the economy would suffer drastically.

There are also those African states which are well disposed to Portugal, countries such as the Ivory Coast, Malawi, Gabon, Madagascar, and the three former High Commission territories--all of which would be forced to follow the majority line. Most of these states accept the principle of "dialogue" as a measure of their good faith that Lisbon's intentions, to a certain extent, are honest in the long term. Should the Portuguese in Guinea invade another country, Portugal's enemies would lose little time in condemning the action as "imperialistic" from the start.

There are no illusions in Lisbon that the United States or even Britain would come rushing to its aid. They have enough economic and political

problems on their hands without getting involved on the wrong side of explosive "race wars" in southern Africa. If there is to be any United States military assistance it must, for the foreseeable future, remain under the counter. One American diplomat whom I met at The Hague, put it this way: "We don't greet each other in the streets, but back home in the parlour we're great pals."

If there is change in conditions along the west coast of Africa, there is also change in Portugal--much of it in the recent past. Although the morale of the Portuguese civilian and military man in the Metropolis has been high for much of the sixties, there has been a definite waning of enthusiasm for the African war effort in the early seventies. Urban guerrilla organizations appeared on the scene in the major Portuguese cities in 1970-71. One of these, a Maoist splinter group which calls itself the A.R.A. (Accao Revolucionarea Armada) has presented the most serious threat to the war effort.

Political agitation has also reached the armed forces, and this is where many career army officers have fears for the future. Although the deserter rate in Portugal's African armies is only running at about 40 a year (most seek refuge in Holland and Sweden), there is a general antipathy towards the war effort, especially among many of the younger conscript officers who have come into uniform straight from university. Correspondents who have come out of the Portuguese war zones recently have noted an outspoken dissidence among some of these young citizen force troops. They not only openly question the nature of Portugal's wars in Africa, but also the reasons for Portugal remaining in Africa as a "Colonial Power." Many ridicule the futility of it all, maintaining that Portugal must leave Africa anyway in the not too distant future, if only for political reasons.

Recent military developments in Portuguese Guinea have not made pleasant news for Lisbon. Following the momentous June, 1971, O.A.U. declaration, there has been a swing away from "pure" guerrilla warfare to massed attacks across the borders of Senegal and the Republic of Guinea. General Spínola, in an interview with members of the Lisbon press corps, spoke of "enormous rebel troop concentrations." Convoys of lorries, he stated, were moving in from Dakar and Conakry to the various front-line staging posts. He spoke of a mass attack by 300 guerrillas on Canquelifa, a town in the north-east of the enclave. The attack had come from Morikounda in Senegal.

General Spínola also said that intelligence sources had indicated that "hundreds of Cubans" had now joined the guerrillas and were actually

leading them in their operations against Portuguese positions. In one attack in the northeast shortly before Christmas, 1971, four Cubans were shot dead and their bodies recovered by Portuguese troops. Three more Cubans were captured alive.

The Portuguese are not all that adverse to mass attacks. For once it gives them positive targets against which they can pit their energy and resources, as opposed to the "ghosts" of guerrilla actions. Simultaneously, however, casualties are higher on both sides. Because most of these attacks take place at night, Portuguese commanders in the field cannot count on air support for additional cover.

Fragmentary reports have been received of a dozen other massed attacks and more are likely to follow in the near future as the PAIGC becomes more determined in the attainment of its aims. It remains only for the Portuguese to be able to hold them all at bay. Of that, at least General Spínola is confident. But for how much longer?

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